













The life of John  
Philip Kemble  
Vol. - 1

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THE  
LIFE

OF

JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE, Esq.

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BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY REFLECTIONS.—HIS BIRTH.—THE AUTHOR'S RECOLLECTIONS OF HIS PARENTS.—HIS ACTING WHEN A CHILD.—PLAY OF CHARLES THE FIRST.—MR. KEMBLE NEVER INTENDED FOR THE STAGE.—HIS EDUCATION.—NOTICES OF HIM AT DOUAY.—HIS STUDIES.—HIS MEMORY.—ORIGINAL BENT OF MIND.—GIBBON.—KEMBLE.—COMES TO ENGLAND.—FIRST EFFORTS.—BISHOP WARBURTON.

THE biography of an actor is the record of his art. To endeavour after any other fame than excellence in his profession, will be injurious rather than salutary, and probably unsuccessful. The studies connected with his art are fully sufficient to occupy his leisure hours, and to divide attention is certainly to weaken it. The less notice the actor

excites off the stage, the better for himself and the public.

The dramatic soil is by no means the natural seed-plot of the virtues; on the contrary, I feel that the actor is surrounded by infinite temptations, and may, therefore, fairly be allowed a somewhat "larger tether" than can be given to other men. And, accordingly, when we find him combine with professional genius the quiet duties of private life; when we know him to be as much respected for his virtues as followed for his talents, he reflects part of his fame upon the community of which he is the ornament. The great tragedian, whose progress I have undertaken to record, was a striking example of the happy combination alluded to. No man was more beloved for his private merits, as no one could be more admired for exalted powers. His reputation as a man passed beyond the circle of his friendships, and became a sort of public property; and frequently, indeed, in his professional life, has that character interposed itself as a shield to protect him against the rash and groundless hostility levelled at him as an actor or a manager.

At first sight one would imagine, that the vast importance of such an union of public with private worth was too obvious to need inculcation. For, let us look to the sure consequences which follow the neglect of it. If, inflated by success upon the stage, the young performer commence a life of

pleasure or profligacy ; if he mix with the dissolute great or the tasteless vulgar, he will not long retain the desire or the power to cultivate his art. He will be contented with his first thoughts, and his judgment will never ripen : he will pall by unvaried repetition, and grow careless when he excites but faint applause. His manager will naturally estimate him by his attraction, and his salary will decline ; his scale of living must be contracted, and his associates will drop off. Commencing his career with popularity, he will close it in neglect ; and, if remembered, will be classed with those at whom good men look grave and prudent men shake the head, and whose celebrity is confined to a circle drawn by the magic hand of intemperance.

As the life I am about to write will show an unvaried aspiration after the best fame, so I have premised the few reflexions above, as a warning to those who affect or feel an indifference for its possession.

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John Philip Kemble was born on the first of February 1757, at Prescott in Lancashire. His father, Mr. Roger Kemble, was manager of a provincial company, performing in Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, &c. &c. His mother, whose maiden name was Ward, was the daughter

of that actor and manager, who, in the year 1746, on the 9th day of September, gave a benefit play in the town-hall of Stratford-upon-Avon, for the purpose of restoring the monument of Shakspeare in the church there.\* The play was Othello; and he spoke himself a prologue written expressly for the occasion by the Rev. Joseph Greene. A few years after this, Mr. Ward's daughter, by giving birth to Mrs. Siddons and Mr. Kemble, did infinitely more for the fame of our great dramatic poet.

As in the course of our friendship he took an opportunity of introducing me to his father and mother, the reader who loved Kemble may thank me here for the impression made by the persons and minds of those from whom he sprung. It will readily be conceived that children, so remarkable for dignity of form and expression of countenance, did not proceed from parents deficient in both. Indeed those qualities were merely transmitted.

I only knew them in their decline of life, and although certainly not surprised, yet I can safely say that I never was more struck than by the sight of his venerable parents. His father had the same style of head as his own, except that the features were more delicately finished, and somewhat less

\* Mr. Ward had been a performer in the time of Betterton, and in 1723 was the original Hazeroth in Fenton's *Mariamne*. On the 25th April 1760, at Dublin, the celebrated Woffington made her first appearance in Sir Harry Wildair for his benefit.

energetic. But his countenance excited reverence beyond any that I have seen ; to which the silver curls of his hair contributed, and the sweet composed and placid character of his deportment.

He was sitting in his son's library, and from a peculiar costume that he had adopted from liability to take cold, (a partial silk covering for the head,) he looked to me rather like a dignitary of the church two centuries back, than a layman of the present age. Our introduction to each other was at once simple and expressive. " This, sir, is my father." And to the old gentleman, " Allow me to present to you my friend, Mr. Boaden." He received me with the benignity suitable to his age, and addressed himself to me occasionally in a way that confirmed my first impression at entering the room. \*

His mother had been a distinguished beauty in her youth, and had once been tempted by a cor-  
nect. What remained of her was of the highest order. She had very uncommon vivacity and point in her conversation. As I sat next to her at dinner, I had full opportunity to remark and enjoy the soundness of her judgment and the peculiar

\* I have been all my life particularly observant of the manners of men at table. I have never yet seen greater ease nor higher polish than were exhibited by Mr. Kemble's father. This opinion of mine was accidentally confirmed the other day by a friend, who is himself commonly deemed one of the best bred men in Europe.



energy of her expressions. I should fancy, among her own sex, that she must have been deemed, like Dr. Johnson, a tremendous converser. Her husband being a catholic, led her to the subject of religious toleration, on which she spoke with great feeling and propriety. She was pleased to find that I could cordially esteem one who was sincere in the profession of opinions different from my own. On the subject of modish affectation, I even yet recollect the poignant severity of her language. Her utterance was, like that of Mrs. Siddons, deliberate, careful in enunciation ; and her diction had a nervous and exact propriety, such as we have all admired in her son.

I remember, too, that in the course of the afternoon the old gentleman, less animated than his wife, had receded to the fire side ; and she took the opportunity to speak to me, aside, of his merits as an actor. He did not hear our conversation, and she finished a pretty extensive range of dramatic characters by a touch of valuable discrimination. “ There sits, unconscious of our remarks, the only *gentleman* Falstaff that I have ever seen.” I may incidentally observe that, among our artists, Falstaff is exhibited as a low and beastly buffoon ; they forget that, though he is Jack with his familiars, he is Sir John with all Europe. It is in this very point of gentility that Mr. Fuseli’s picture of him differs from every other.

The reputation of their children may render

these slight sketches of the parents of some value. They seemed to feel for their son the greatest esteem as well as affection; and his manner of addressing THEM was a model of filial deference and consideration. I never beheld a family group more interesting; and he no doubt designed to oblige me highly, when he that day took me home with him, without a formal invitation.

Mr. Kemble, while yet a child, performed in his father's company. In all probability he represented the little prating York in Richard the Third, while his sister might assume the character of Prince Edward; for it appears by a play bill dated the 12th of February 1767, that he played at Worcester, the part of the Duke of York, afterwards James the Second, in Havard's pathetic tragedy of Charles the First. His sister, Mrs. Siddons, personated that glorious creature the Princess Elizabeth, to whom her dying father commended his last farewell to the Queen, her mother, together with the assurances of his inviolable fidelity and affection. The vulgar assassins of that day had, it is said, formed the gracious design of placing her as an apprentice to a button maker, but the sufferings of her family sunk so deeply into her tender mind, that their malice was disappointed.

“ She died, a most rare child ! of melancholy.”

Although this tragedy has long been laid aside in our theatres, it was once extremely popular. A

few months before Mr. Kemble made his first appearance in the York company, Cummins, his great rival, acted the character of King Charles at Hull; and the curtain had no sooner fallen upon the catastrophe, than a very amiable young lady, the daughter of an officer whose name was Terrot, dropt down dead instantaneously in her box. There was no doubt at the time that this disaster was caused by too severe a sympathy in the distresses of the scene. Such a circumstance enveloped the tragedy in a sort of superstitious horror; and for a long while the company could not venture to repeat it.

Mr. Kemble, the father, never intended the stage as a profession for any of his children; and accordingly, after receiving the first elements of education at a preparatory school at Worcester, his son John was sent to the roman catholic seminary of Sedgely Park, in Staffordshire. The exigencies of the company might require the early aid of his children, but if he originally designed them for other professions, it was injudicious to subject them, at the time of life when impressions are the keenest, to the glitter of the stage and the delight of popular applause. However destined, they all, we know, at some period of their lives, made attempts upon the stage, though with various success. Of some I can truly say, that they were but respectable in the art, to which pretty general opinion, no doubt, the transcendent excellence of the others itself greatly contributed.

At Sedgeley Park Kemble certainly distinguished himself. He had great application and diligence, and his proficiency was so decided, that it was determined he should complete his studies in the course prescribed by his religion; and he was accordingly, at the usual period, removed to the English college at Douay, to qualify him, at all events, for one of the learned professions.

I have heard the system of tuition at Douay, highly commended by a cotemporary there of Mr. Kemble's, and he himself always spoke with admiration and gratitude of the professors who had directed his studies. He mentioned the facility he formerly possessed of Latin declamation, and I remember spontaneously evinced that he had by no means lost the power, by addressing, for some minutes, an imaginary assembly, in the language of his own Brutus. In recapitulating his Greek studies, he assured me that his early impression from some of the writings of the Stagyrte had never been weakened; and that he thought the intellect of that philosopher superior to all competition. We were speaking of the Ethics and the Art of Poetry; and the conversation arose out of an examination he had been making of the admired translation of the latter by Mr. Twining. Our poetic versions of the Greek tragedians were not close enough to satisfy him.

He pointed in his library to a voluminous work of Alban Butler's, "The Lives of the Saints," which he told me he once knew thoroughly, whatever

might be his present studies ; and that the writings of the fathers of the church were familiar to him. He evidently, at that time, studied for divinity. But, amid the classical or sacred pursuits of his college, he kept up an ardent love for the literature of his country ; and, as a reciter from our great poets, he had, at Douay, the reputation which through life he constantly maintained, of being one of the most harmonious speakers of English versification.

I once heard, from unquestionable authority, a pleasing trait of Kemble's mind, during his residence at Douay. His class, for some indiscretions, had fallen under severe censure of the masters ; and with a view to vicarious atonement, an imposition was proposed of two books of Homer, to be gotten by heart. Kemble modestly, but immediately, volunteered to accept the task ; and by close application, and his uncommon memory, enabled himself to remove the censure, by accurately repeating at least 1500 lines. The gallantry of the act could not but endear him to his class, and acquire for him the esteem and strong attention of the masters.

Of this college, perhaps, my readers may wish some brief account. It originated in the desire formed by certain English exiles to live together in some establishment, in which they might pursue their studies, and also propagate their religious opinions. William Allen, formerly of Oxford, and

a dignitary of the church in Queen Mary's reign, in the year 1568, persuaded several persons, educated at both our universities, to unite themselves for this purpose. Morgan Phillips, who had been Provost of Oriel and Allen's tutor, was the first to subscribe for the purchase of a house. Pope Gregory XIII. encreased their slender revenues to 1500*l.* a year, a sufficient fund, it was thought, for a community of sixty persons.

They were occasionally, from the troubles excited against them, transferred to Rheims, but returned again at calmer seasons to Douay. The chief management of the concern was in the hands of Dr. Lewis, who had procured very considerable benefactions towards defraying the expenses of furniture; and, as a mark of honour, he was himself allowed to nominate a president. He appointed Dr. Maurice Church, who was a bishop elect in Mary's time, but that reverend person held the appointment only a single year, when the government of the college was transferred to the jesuits. That learned body built up for Douay, as for every other seat of their residence, a high reputation for learning and discipline, which was, since their superintendence, not suffered to decline.

I am in course disposed to speak in commendation of a college from which Kemble derived such essential benefits; and I know not how to render them superior honour, to that which they acquired

by their reply to the three queries put to them in 1789, by the Catholics of England.

They denied that the Pope or the cardinals, or even the Church, derived from God any civil authority in the kingdom of England.

They equally denied the mischievous power to absolve the subjects of a temporal prince from their allegiance.

Upon the monstrous doctrine, that no faith was to be kept with Heretics, though under the sanction of an oath, they solemnly declared, that there was no principle in their religion that warranted such a conclusion; that it was the unanimous doctrine of the Catholics, that the respect due to the name of God requires that the oath be inviolably kept, to whomsoever it is pledged, whether Catholic, Heretic, or Infidel. That these are the doctrines constantly taught in their schools, and maintained in their theses.

The document, at length, may be found in Mr. C. Butler's Historical Memoirs of the Catholics, and is dated from Douay, 5th January, 1789. The same excellent writer has given a character of Alban Butler's work, noticed above, which, as much valued by Mr. Kemble, I shall here insert.

“ The erudition, the beauty of the style, the  
“ true spirit of religion, and the mild and concili-  
“ ating language, which pervade the work, edified  
“ all its readers; disposed them to be pleased with

“ a religion in which they saw so much virtue ;  
“ allayed their prejudices against its professors ;  
“ and led them to consider the general body with  
“ good will.”

Mr. Gibbon characterises it thus : — “ A work  
“ of merit — the sense and learning belong to the  
“ author — his prejudices are those of his pro-  
“ fession.” — *Decline and Fall*.

But the sarcasm of the philosopher was, perhaps, sharpened by the recollection of his own penance as an apostate.

Mr. Gibbon has said, with respect to original bent of the mind to some one pursuit, that HE felt a strong and unconquerable tendency to become an historian. Mr. Kemble considered himself destined to be an actor. At all times have I heard him testify this preference ; and at some, when what he saw in the profession would have led many to regret that they had ever yielded to the temptation.

To England however he came, resolved to make a public appearance upon the stage. With his father's great experience, it is not astonishing that he should be displeased at a determination, which put an end to the more sober wishes he had formed for his advancement. He may be allowed to feel some mortification at his son's choice, for what was then to assure him of the great and lasting eminence which he attained ? The son, however, having determined on his course, soon began the



practice of his art. His first performance in England was on the 8th January, 1776. He acted the character of Theodosius, in the tragedy so called ; and his debüt was witnessed by the inhabitants of Wolverhampton. He was never, I think, calculated to make much impression upon an uncultivated assembly. His voice was not remarkably powerful, and to the graces of refined elocution his audience had not been accustomed.

Our youthful hero was probably attracted to the *Force of Love*, by the speeches of ardent passion it contains, where Lee is the rival of Otway. All my female readers remember the often-quoted passage in the second act, beginning with this soft effusion : —

“ No more of this, no more ; for I disdain  
All pomp when thou art by. Far be the noise  
Of kings and courts from us, whose gentle souls  
Our kinder stars have steer’d another way.”

But the graver critic may consider and compare the following description of night, in the second scene of the fifth act, with that celebrated one by Dryden, and whatever else of the kind English poetry can supply.

*Var.* — “ Tis night, dead night, and weary nature lies  
So fast, as if she never were to rise :  
No breath of wind now whispers thro’ the trees ;  
No noise at land, no murmur in the seas ;  
Lean wolves forget to howl at night’s pale noon ;  
No wakeful dogs bark at the silent moon,

Nor bay the ghosts that glide with horror by,  
To view the caverns where their bodies lie ;  
The ravens perch, and no presages give,  
Nor to the windows of the dying cleave ;  
The owls forget to scream ; no midnight sound  
Calls drowsy echo from the hollow ground ;  
In vaults the walking fires extinguish'd lie ;  
The stars, heav'n's sentry, wink, and seem to die."

The power of the poet is felt, in these succeeding images of silence, to invade us with a creeping horror, which acquires at length a full possession of the breast, and "our nerves are in their infancy again." A nice ear may object to the recurrence of the same rhymes ; and the ideas may be deemed too common and appropriated ; but the sensible effect of the lines is what I have stated.

The audience of Wolverhampton preferred his Bajazet to his Theodosius.

During this unsettled period of his life, the industry of his biographers has associated with the name of Kemble some of the long established anecdotes of the profession ; making one ruffle do double duty, and other simple expedients, attributed to every country actor in succession. Some writers make him pay his landlady, by spinning a top violently over the head of her sick husband — an act of such unfeeling barbarity as no pecuniary distress could extenuate — and this, too, is told of a man who was exemplary for the tender regard he showed to the feelings of others. One writer brings to this stock of common stage properties, a

banquet, that Kemble and his travelling companion took the liberty of making, of apples and pears, in a gentleman's orchard near Gloucester. They seem to have borrowed their notions of biography from Master Slender, who, after assuring Mistress Anne Page that "he *had* a FATHER," requests his uncle, Mr. Justice Shallow, to tell Mrs. Anne the jest, how his father "stole two geese out of a pen."

It is moreover told, too, that this period of indolence and sordid distress lasted several years. To be sure, it is at the same time said, that he was born in 1757, came over to England from Douay when he was nineteen, and we find him a steady performer of the York company in 1778. The indolence, too, had produced some dramatic pieces, subsequently played at Liverpool, and York and Edinburgh; lectures upon oratory, sacred and profane; and we may add, a study of his profession as an actor, which few have ever so deeply made. But every thing must give way to the desire of showing, that the excellence, which now cannot be denied, was once doubtful or unpossessed. Writers would shudder, if some deity were to display to them the malignity they shroud under the veil of narrative impartiality.

But all his time, it seems, was not to pass in indigence or contempt. One of his admirers, probably in recompence for the crude banquet in the orchard, gives him a flight as high as the episcopal

palace of Gloucester, and seats him at the table of Bishop Warburton. The genius of that editor of Shakspeare led him to bold experiments upon the text, and to interpretations of mere household words, by which a latent and profound meaning was extracted, that nobody but himself ever suspected to be there. It may be inferred that Warburton, when admiring the *new readings* of Kemble, was but applauding a kindred taste. He is said to have allayed the fervour of his commendations by a sober admonition to his guest, who is stated to have swallowed at table repeated draughts of ale: “Young man, they who drink ale *think* “ale.” If the readings were acute, the caution had more point than pertinence. But the writer of the anecdote might have found, on a little reflection, that the occurrence was impossible.

In the discourse by his friend Hurd, printed in quarto, 1794, by way of general preface to the bishop’s works, at page 108. is the following interesting account of his latter years; and they embrace the only period during which Kemble could have been introduced to Warburton.

“The last years of the bishop’s life were clouded  
“with misfortune as well as indisposition. He  
“had for some time been so sensible of his declining health, that he read little and wrote less.  
“But in the course of the year 1776, the loss of a  
“favourite son and only child, who died of a consumption in his eighteenth year, when every hope

“ was springing up in the breast of a fond parent,  
“ to make amends, as it were, for his want of actual  
“ enjoyment, — this sudden affliction, I say, op-  
“ pressed him to that degree, as to put an end to  
“ his literary labours, and even amusements, at  
“ once. From that disastrous moment he lived  
“ on, indeed, for two or three years; but, when he  
“ had settled his affairs, as was proper, upon this  
“ great change in his family, he took no concern  
“ in the ordinary occurrences of life, and grew so  
“ indifferent to every thing, that even his books  
“ and writings seemed, thenceforth, to be utterly  
“ disregarded by him. Not that his memory and  
“ faculties, though very much impaired, were ever  
“ wholly disabled. I saw him so late as October,  
“ 1778, when I went into his diocese to confirm  
“ for him. On our first meeting, before his family,  
“ he expressed his concern that I should take that  
“ journey, and put myself to so much trouble, on  
“ his account. And, afterwards, he took occasion  
“ to say some pertinent and obliging things, which  
“ shewed, not only his usual friendliness of temper,  
“ but the command he had of his attention. Nor  
“ was this all. The evening before I left him, he  
“ desired the family to withdraw, and then entered  
“ into a confidential discourse with me on some  
“ private affairs which he had much at heart, with  
“ as much pertinence and good sense as he could  
“ have done in any former part of his life. Such  
“ was the power he had over his mind, when roused

“ to exert himself by some interesting occasion !  
“ But this was an effort, which could not be sustained very long. In less than half an hour the  
“ family returned, and he relapsed into his usual  
“ forgetfulness and inattention.”

It was of course in this season of parental agony, worldly indifference, abstraction from all amusements, failure of memory, inattention to associates, and incurable melancholy, that the anecdote supposes him to have welcomed an itinerant actor to his table, discussed with him his new readings in Hamlet, and to have sported the monitory dissuasions from indulging in too much ale.

Perhaps the reader may excuse me for having made the above extract fuller than the refutation of an idle tale required, as the whole passage is extremely striking, and closes the history of one of the first of men. Bishop Hurd had but little more to add to the above picture. Warburton expired at the palace in Gloucester, on the 7th of June, 1779, and was buried in his cathedral, at no great distance from the west door, and near to the grave of one of his predecessors, Bishop Benson.

Mr. Craddock was the person who was said to have introduced Kemble to Bishop Warburton, and he did interest himself greatly about the success of his young friend ; but the actor in question never had the happiness, such he would indeed have thought it, to be presented to the author of the Divine Legation.

## CHAP. II.

HIS YORK ENGAGEMENT. — HIS WRITINGS FOR THE STAGE.  
 — ORESTES. — HIS PORTRAIT BY STUART. — LORD  
 PERCY'S INTERFERENCE FOR MR. KEMBLE. — MRS. MASON  
 IN ZENOBIA. — MISS ELEANORA S., HER BEHAVIOUR AND  
 ITS PERPLEXING CONSEQUENCES. — KEMBLE'S MANLI-  
 NESS. — SHARP CONTEST. — DR. BURGH, GENERAL ST.  
 LEGER. — GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON SUCH ANNOYANCES.  
 — LUNATIC ASYLUM. — KEMBLE'S PROLOGUE. — MR.  
 INCHBALD'S DEATH. — MR. KEMBLE'S FUGITIVE PIECES  
 IN 1780. — THEATRICAL FETE. — MR. KEMBLE'S IRISH  
 ENGAGEMENT. — DIGGES. — MRS. CRAWFORD. — MRS.  
 SIDDONS. — MISS PHILLIPS AND HER CHAMPION.

THE provincial engagements of Mr. Kemble produced to him frequent mortification, and little of either profit or fame, with the exceptions of Manchester and Liverpool; in both of these towns he left a favourable impression, which has constantly been kept up by summer engagements; and he could name many persons of talent and consideration, who looked upon his ultimate triumph as a matter of absolute certainty.

It would not be my wish, if I had the means, to trace him through his severe pilgrimage among our country theatres; more particularly as I intend to give a pretty ample sketch of his progress, during the three years he continued in the York company.

It was early in the October of 1778 that he joined them, then, and long, under the management of Tate Wilkinson.

Mrs. Siddons had experienced so much favour from the audiences of Yorkshire, that it seemed adviseable for her brother to try the effect of claims, every way kindred. The company had just made the experiment of an additional week at Wakefield ; as it did not answer, it is useless to detail the mortifications of the manager. I have mentioned it solely for the purpose of stating that Mr. Kemble made his first appearance in the character of Captain Plume, in Farquhar's lively comedy of the Recruiting Officer — with a pantomime.

But it was at Hull that he made the first appearance of any consequence ; and there he played Macbeth on the 30th of October. There are no means of estimating how nearly then his performance approached to his maturer efforts ; but I have strong reason to think that, to sound judges, the dawn sufficiently indicated what the day would prove.

To be sure, the eye, accustomed to all the splendor of our present theatres, may turn with apprehension to the deficiencies of provincial stages ; and it may be conjectured that the actor was lost for want of our brilliant aids. But I doubt this extremely. I incline, from early recollections, to think, that, as the actors then occupied the whole attention, they had greater power over the specta-



tor. If the scenery had decent propriety, it was sufficient; if the dresses were not old, the costume was little regarded.

In a country company, the more extensive an actor's powers are, the better for the concern. Although I should conceive that Mr. Kemble, even in his youth, could never have been wholly at ease in comedy, yet we find him following *Macbeth* by *Archer*, and becoming speedily an object of great importance to the manager.

To those who remember Mr. Kemble's latter diffidence, as an author, it may excite surprise that, on his just attaining manhood, he should venture before an audience a tragedy of his own composition. On the 29th of December, this year, he brought out his tragedy of *Belisarius* for his own benefit. As I have never seen a line of this play, I cannot speak to its merits: it appears to have been well received, to have been thought creditable to his talents, and to have acquired for him both money and reputation.

As I well know his extreme humility as to his writings, the real inducements to this exhibition must have been of a politic nature. He had felt that the report of his education was serviceable to him; it gave him consideration with those who had learning, and a little awed the decisions of those who had none. The more various the display he could make of his powers, therefore, the better. He had no rivals in the company as an author; it

insinuated a suspicion, that he might *really* have none as an actor.

But at York it seemed there were difficulties to be surmounted. There was a good deal of prepossession to strive against — his rivals, it may be readily imagined, did not yield to him without a struggle; Cummins had long been the favourite with the MANY.

On the 19th of January, 1779, he acted on the York stage the character of Orestes, a part to which he was long attached; the scene where his imagination suggests to him the persecution of the Furies, was at all times one of his greatest efforts. The artist called American Stuart subsequently painted him in this character: it is a head, and conveys the incipient madness with perfect identity of expression. It affords a fine opportunity of ascertaining the change which time brought upon his features, and is still, I believe, in the possession of his friend the Rev. C. Este. It might be compared with Sir Thomas Lawrence's portrait of him in Cato.

Mr. Kemble chose Ranger for his second performance at York.

It is a curious circumstance, that his early love of a more perfect exhibition of the drama should have been the fortunate cause of his intimacy with the late Duke of Northumberland. On the 22d February 1779, that distinguished nobleman, then Lord Percy, arrived at York with two troops of the

king's own dragoons. They remained in the town until the 26th of the following April. It occurred to Kemble, that a few soldiers might be rendered highly serviceable in the processions of the theatre, and he applied to the officer on duty for permission to employ them on such occasions. The officer, in his zeal for military discipline, told him that the men had more important duties to attend to. Mr. Kemble, however, was not easily induced at any time to give up a favourite object, and solicited the powerful interference of Lord Percy. His lordship condescended to interest himself about it, and the objection was immediately withdrawn.

On the 10th of April, the officers bespoke a play for the benefit of Mrs. Hunter. The play was the *School for Lovers*. To add a novelty to the attractions of the evening, Mr. Kemble presented to that lady a comedy which he had written, called the *Female Officer*. I presume the real soldiers to have been employed on this occasion.

After the performances of the evening, Lord Percy took Mr. Kemble home to sup with him. I learn from a most accurate and excellent friend of his through life, that Kemble did not then first become known to his lordship, though the favourable impression made upon the mind of that nobleman this night appears to have ripened into esteem, and ultimately suggested to him the desire that his son, the present duke, might receive the benefit of his instructions.

An Arabian proverb tells us, that "the habit-  
"ation of danger is on the borders of security." I  
am now to relate a circumstance in his dramatic  
life, which led him to feel, very painfully indeed,  
the condition of an actor, among the proud, the  
thoughtless, the indelicate, and yet sometimes the  
leading parts of the community.

On the 13th of April 1779, Murphy's tragedy  
of Zenobia was performed, and a Mrs. Mason was  
the heroine of the evening. The stage-box was  
unfortunately occupied by a lady of some distinc-  
tion, whose ill-nature vented itself in the form of  
criticism; and Mrs. Mason became the object of  
her derision, which she expressed by loud and ill-  
bred laughter, to the annoyance of the poor victim,  
and of every body but the persons in her imme-  
diate suite.

Mr. Kemble too, because he perhaps could not  
*shout* like Cummins, or because he had a dark  
complexion; because he had the reputation of  
learning, or because the lady cared not about a  
reason when she wanted to amuse herself, he also  
became a mark for this silly woman's annoyance.

I do not suppose that she was aware of Dr.  
Johnson's opinion of Zenobia, that it had too much  
Tig. and Teri. in it (the names of two of the cha-  
racters being Tigranes and Teribazus); but Mr.  
Kemble performed the part of the latter, who is  
the lover of the piece, and shared with Mrs. Mason  
the contempt and derision of Miss S. and her party.

In the interesting scenes of the last act, she found full gratification for her spleen, as both her objects were together upon the stage, and she redoubled her efforts to cover them with disgrace. The actress had made little impression on any body, but Kemble was shocked at the brutal treatment she received. As to the insults designed for himself during the evening, he had retorted them by looks of infinite disdain. His sensibility was noticed in the box by loud and repeated peals of laughter from the lady and her echoes. At this, Kemble suddenly stopped, and being called upon by the audience to proceed, with great gravity and a pointed bow to the stage-box, he said "he was ready to proceed with the play as soon as THAT lady had finished her conversation, which he perceived the going on with the tragedy only interrupted."

The audience received this rudeness of the stage-box as an insolent attempt to control their amusements, and with shouts, which could not be laughed down, ordered the lady and her party out of the theatre.

That an actor, however, should presume to resent the conduct of a lady of family, was an outrage not to be endured; and some officers of the militia, at her desire, undertook to obtain a full and public reparation of the affront. They went round to the manager, and tried to alarm him on the side of his interest. He appears on this occasion to have done

Kemble justice ; to have urged to them his education, his talents, his spirit, and gentlemanly feeling ; and to have shown how vain it would be to expect from him any submission where, in truth, HE WAS the injured person.

Mr. Kemble attended these gentlemen in the manager's room, and very coolly and temperately repeating his provocations, refused compliance with their demand. The officers returned to the lady, and reported their failure. The audience in the meantime having made up their minds to support him, Kemble, upon their vehement call, coming on, was saluted with the words " No apology — No apology," from various parts of the theatre. The boxes, however, obtained him a hearing, and he proceeded to represent his grievance, and to touch with great feeling and propriety, in a vein of elocution not often heard from the stage, upon the mortifying circumstances to which his profession was subjected. This, as it little suited the purpose, so it probably passed the comprehension of some of his persecutors. They, therefore, in terms too vulgar to bear repetition, told him to put an end to his impertinent and impudent harangue, and ask pardon immediately.

Mr. Kemble on this, with the greatest firmness, and with some of that mingled astonishment and disdain, which he threw afterwards into Coriolanus, exclaimed " Pardon ! ask pardon ! no, sirs, " — NEVER ;" and immediately quitted the stage,

attended by the acclamations of the liberal part of the audience.

Attempts were renewed on the Saturday, when Mr. Kemble acted Douglas, in Miss Moore's play of Percy, to humble this intractable tragedian; and again on the following Thursday; when after Macbeth, in which not Kemble but the manager performed the thane, the offender acted the master in Dodsley's Toy-shop. His friend Dr. Burgh, a gentleman highly respected for his abilities, and General St. Leger, who was then fortunately at York, acted as mediators between the exasperated gentry who made a common cause against the comedian, and the indignant "Roman actor," who refused to compromise either his profession or his character.

All that Kemble could be made to yield was this: "Let me be heard before I am condemned: if, when I have explained my conduct, any gentleman, or set of gentlemen, will say, in that character, that I have acted unworthily, I shall cheerfully make any reparation that they may judge proper." To this there could be no *reasonable* objection, and he was heard. His fine address, his clear statement, his modesty and manliness, carried the cause, and contributed essentially to his progress in the public favour.

Miss Eleanora S——e was the daughter of a baronet, and her family is accurately known to me. However blameable her conduct on this occasion, I shall not more distinctly commemorate her folly.

A few years after, when this silly and offensive being read the success of Mr. Kemble in the metropolis ; when she found him honoured with the notice, even, of majesty, admired and followed by the first in rank and talent, how severely must she have smarted at the recollection of her malice or her bad taste, or both ; and how vainly wished that on this unlucky night, at least, her petulance had annoyed only her domestic circle, or at farthest her select and fashionable acquaintance.

I hope the illiberality above recorded is fading fast away. In the metropolis the patrons of the theatre are mixed up with the public, and lost in the general mass : in the provinces they must be individually solicited on the part of manager and actor, and a greater distance is created between the artist and those by whom he lives. Benefit-plays, in particular, keep the servile dependence alive.

At first sight it might be thought that this matter could be easily arranged ; that an actor took his talent, as every thing else is taken, to an open market, where the demand for the supply would always produce its exact value : but in provincial towns much previous reputation or local interest is needed to lift that talent into notice, or sustain it against prejudice.

In the wanton consequence of high station many a wound has been inflicted, which no time has healed. The derision of such a person as Miss S.



may have driven some feebler natures to despair. Kemble always knew his proper value. He had studied his profession accurately; had brought to it a mind well prepared, and an ardent love of the art. He had said at his outset that he would be the first actor of his time and manager of Drury-lane theatre, and he kept his word.

In May, 1779, Dr. Hunter patronized a play for the Lunatic Asylum at York. Mr. Kemble, at the doctor's desire, wrote an occasional prologue. He in the same month invoked his muse for the Leeds Infirmary, and his compositions had the praise that no criticism can take away, that of aiding the cause of charity, and mitigating the severest of human calamities. As I believe he never revised any of these early poems, but left them under final anathema, I shall quote from neither of them; indeed I mention them here only to show the opinion that then attached to him for cultivated understanding and poetic fancy, — and that any call of humanity or friendship upon his pen, was promptly and effectively obeyed.

The season at York closed with the Fair Penitent, in which Kemble was the Lothario to the Horatio of Cummins.

Mr. Kemble had greatly attached himself to the Inchbalds, then in the same company, and they were acting together at Leeds in the June of 1779, when their society suffered a severe shock from the sudden death of Mr. Inchbald, which

happened on Sunday, the 6th of that month. No man of his time could be more regretted. His talents were eminently useful to the company, and his probity and gentlemanly manners made him infinitely beloved by all with whom he was connected. His wife was the beautiful and most accomplished lady, who resided so long in the metropolis, whose dramatic efforts and whose novels have afforded to us all so much amusement, and whom her familiar friends were accustomed to designate as — the MUSE.

Mr. Inchbald had felt a slight indisposition, which his wife attributed to the day's heat, or a casual obstruction in the stomach. She had therefore recommended him to take some repose, and they had retired together, but he suddenly expired in her arms, and left her to mourn a loss, which she seems to have considered irreparable; for with all the captivations of beauty and mental powers, she never accepted a second husband. She, to be sure, needed no protector but her virtue, no other support than her talents.

For this lady Mr. Kemble always expressed the affection of a brother. Whether, as the wandering patentee insinuates, he ever felt the power of her beauty, and sued to her for acceptance, I know not. Stories of this nature are so easily invented, and the probable is so sure to be asserted as the true, that the event may be the safest guide. I rather think that, had Mr. Kemble proposed him-

self he would not have been refused. Although Mr. Inchbald had given to his wife a profession, in which, notwithstanding her impediment, she was respectable, the rising fortunes of such a man as Kemble must have seemed no slight addition to the prospects of the widow. Prudence might have determined him to avoid any early engagement of this nature.

To the memory of his friend Inchbald he addressed a blank ode, in imitation of the admired one to evening, by the poet Collins. Its opening images have too close a similarity ; but Kemble is clearer as to his sense, because less involved in the grammatical construction. Collins's seems to be an invocation without an object, or one utterly disproportioned to its elaborate introduction. He also composed the Latin inscription upon Mr. Inchbald's tomb at Leeds, to which he told me some objection had once been raised, as to the lineal disposition of the matter. \*

These poems are to be found in a very small collection of fugitive pieces, published at York in 1780. I have read a ridiculous story, that he was so hurt when he saw them in print, that he endeavoured to suppress them, and "at one fell swoop" destroyed 250 copies. This, by the way, was fifty more than the whole impression: 200 only were

\* The following lines seem to remember that they were both Catholics.

" Procul este, invida superstitio,

" Et mala suadens religionis turbidus amor !"

printed, and his publisher continued to sell these, quite unmolested by the author, down to the year 1803. I have his own authority for saying that, at that time, about a dozen copies remained in his hands, which Mr. Kemble begged of him, and upon receiving them he certainly put them, with much tranquillity, into the fire, a fate which, since then, invariably attended any straggling copy which he begged from a friend, and I believe even bought at any sale which contained it. In the year 1818 he found two or three copies still in York; he bought them at 1*l.* 11*s.* 6*d.* each; and there I believe closed his fiery persecution of these fugitives.

The year 1780, however, was distinguished by an alteration of the Comedy of Errors, to which he gave the title of *Oh! it's impossible!* and here he revelled in whimsicality. The real humour of the two Dromios is in the spectators seeing *clearly* where the *dramatis personæ* mistake the men. Kemble contrived to puzzle the house as well as the stage, by making them *black* servants. Had this alteration been printed, I incline to think his maturer judgment would certainly have condemned the whole impression to the flames. Much may be pardoned to three-and-twenty; but when, of full age, such men as Davenant and Dryden could commit their horrible outrage upon the Tempest, and look complacently too upon the fertility of their inventions, the offence of Mr. Kemble may

be dismissed with gentle rebuke. I mention it in the hope that it may tend to repress the rage for improving Shakspeare : in other words holding out our feeble taper to the sun.

In this year also he ventured to occupy the public attention, alone, during a whole evening, and the following bill preserves the nature of the exhibition :

*For this Night only,*  
An Attic Evening's Entertainment.

THEATRE, LEEDS.

On Monday Evening, June 24, 1780, at 7 o'clock,

Mr. KEMBLE

*Will deliver a Lecture on the Art of Speaking.*

PART FIRST.

*Sacred Eloquence,*

Exemplified in St. Paul's Defence at the Tribunal of King Agrippa.

PART SECOND.

*Oratory of the Theatre,*

Exemplified in the following Pieces :

Narrative.

Circassian. — *Kemble.*

Declamatory.

Hamlet's Instructions to the Players.

Hamlet's Soliloquy on Death.

Pathetic.

Maria, }  
Lefevre. } *Sterne.*

Night, }  
Elegy on Mr. Inchbald. } *Kemble.*

Ode to the Passions. — *Collins.*

On the 17th of August following he gave the good

people of Leeds a second attic evening, with some alterations. In the division of Sacred Eloquence he then spoke an extract against Oaths, from Saint John Chrysostom's fifteenth homily to the people of Antioch. And under that of the Pathetic, he delivered (omitting Lefevre) the Sword, and the Dead Ass, from Sterne, and a paper from the Adventurer.

In the following year we find Mrs. Inchbald accepting an engagement at Covent Garden Theatre.

The progress of Mr. Kemble in the public favour was now great indeed. He did not at all relax in his efforts. He gave at York, in the January of 1781, the most distinguished of his performances, Hamlet; and also delivered a lecture on Public Speaking, which he had rendered extremely interesting by the beautiful examples he had selected of poetic and prose composition. Our odes he delivered with something of *stage* effect; he read more temperately the stories of Maria and Lafleur. At a later period he used to say "Reading should be *reading*." We shall find his talents as a lecturer remembered some time after by a distinguished nobleman, and originate an act of princely magnificence.

Tate Wilkinson has taken credit for introducing Massinger's Roman Actor to Kemble's acquaintance. It may be so; I shall not, at *that* time, dispute the manager's greater researches into our an-

cient drama. At all events he afforded our *English* actor an opportunity to deliver the splendid declamation of Paris, one of the most finished pieces of that peculiar master of oratory, Massinger.

Under the title of a Theatrical Fête were given, on the same evening,

The speeches of Brutus and Marc Antony, from Julius Cæsar ;

The defence of the stage, from the Roman Actor ;

The fourth act of Shakspeare's Henry IVth ; first part ;

And three acts of Dr. Young's tragedy of the Brothers.

Kemble, Cummins, and the manager, who was, of course, the king of the fête, rendered this *pasticcio* attractive, at York, at Hull, and at Edinburgh.

To this latter city he was led by Wilkinson's having hired the theatre from Mr. Ross in July 1781. There Mr. Kemble, among his range of characters, performed Puff, in the Critic. The close of his labours, as a constant member of the company, was however fast approaching ; for, on the 31st of August, on their return to York, he concluded his engagement with the performance of Jaffier. Hitchcock, it seems, when he quitted Wilkinson himself, displayed to Kemble the splendid temptations of Dublin, and he had agreed, without any long delay, to pay a visit to the sister island.

I have given this detail of his engagement with the York company, because, in the first place,

York has a sort of metropolitan dignity among our theatres ; and, secondly, because it serves to mark the progressive advances of an actor destined ultimately to London. It makes the profession known with some distinctness ; shews its temporary triumphs and its reverses, its sunshine and its shade. In the particular instance of Mr. Kemble, we find that much of the disesteem for the player was mitigated by considerations of a purely personal nature. It was known, that he had received a learned education and had acquired academic distinction — to gratify a ruling passion he had withdrawn from the honours of literature, and the high station to which literature may be expected to conduct.

Yet even this gentleman was so circumstanced, that it needed all his temper, his fortitude, and his eloquence, to avoid disgrace or dismissal. As to the parts, which a country company required, or his own wish might lead him to sustain, I imagine a smile excited *now* by his performance of Archer and of Ranger ; but the reader may perhaps laugh out, when he is requested to conceive, in the same company, the effect of Mr. Fawcett's appearance in the characters of young Norval and Romeo. Yet let it be remembered, that the *habits* of this valuable actor were then unfixed, and that he must always have had *spirit* and *feeling*.

At York, Mr. Kemble was courted by most of the considerable inhabitants. In literary charac-



ters the place did not abound ; but he cultivated the friendship of Dr. Hunter, the excellent editor of Evelyn's *Silva*, and that of Dr. Burgh, author of the *Scriptural Confutation of Lindsay*, and editor of the posthumous pieces of the poet Mason. Let me also commemorate the lasting intimacy he formed with the present alderman Wilson of that city, who has attended him through his brilliant career with sincere affection, and now laments the loss of his "matchless friend," with feelings, that are a distinguished honour to his memory.

Mr. Kemble's Irish engagement was so far liberal on the part of Daly ; he had five pounds a week, then the highest salary, and every facility was afforded to the display of his powers in tragedy. The theatre in Smock Alley opened in October 1781. Mr. Kemble's first appearance was in *Hamlet*, on the 2d November, and it certainly was much admired ; his second performance, on the following night, was better attended than the first, and Daly seemed to feel the importance of his acquisition. But unluckily Daly made a point of Kemble's acting *Sir George Touchwood* in Mrs. Cowley's beautiful comedy of the *Belle's Stratagem* ; and the audience who came to see the new actor suffered the disappointment produced by his acting a part totally unsuited to his powers. Hitchcock, however, prevailed upon Daly to get up *Alexander the Great* for the young tragedian, and it served to balance in some respects the unpropitious exhibition in the comedy. The Irish, like the Scotch,

are strongly national ; and Jephson's Count of Narbonne, having succeeded in London, was got up in Dublin at both theatres. This play is taken from Walpole's romance, the Castle of Otranto, and it may be amusing to insert what he says, with all his Gothic predilections, upon Mr. Jephson's tragedy.

Berkley Square, Sunday morning,  
November 18, 1781.

I HAVE been here again for three days, tending, and nursing and waiting on Mr. Jephson's play. I have brought it into the world, was well delivered of it ; it can stand on its own legs, and I am going back to my own quiet hill, never likely to have any thing more to do with theatres. Indeed it has seemed strange to me, who for these three or four years have not been so many times in a playhouse, nor knew six of the actors by sight, to be at two rehearsals behind the scenes, in the green-room, and acquainted with half the company. The Count of Narbonne was played last night with great applause, and without a single murmur of disapprobation. Miss Younge has charmed me. She played with intelligence that was quite surprising. The applause to one of her speeches lasted a minute, and recommenced twice before the play could go on. I am sure you will be pleased with the conduct, and the easy beautiful language of the play ; and struck with her acting.

To the Hon. H. S. Conway.

Mr. Kemble made a very strong impression in the Count. Daly himself acted Theodore, — Mitchell, Austin, — Mrs. Montague, the Countess, — and the Adelaide was Miss Francis, then unthought of, but who was to be the comic darling of her country, under the name of Mrs. Jordan. Jephson himself attended the rehearsals. Mr. Kemble burst upon the audience in the full blaze of his powers: from that moment his reputation was increased, or rather then decided. Captain Jephson was astonished and delighted. He took Mr. Kemble home to his house, introduced him to Luke Gardiner, afterwards Lord Mountjoy, Mr. Tighe, Mr. Courtney and others, his friends through life. That winter he added Sir Giles Overreach and Romeo to his Hamlet and Alexander, but the Count of Narbonne was the unrivalled attraction. The Irish did a two-fold justice in their partiality — the play by their countryman was beautifully written, and its principal character was acted in a very striking manner. Miss Younge, in the spring of 1782, went over to Dublin, and acted the Countess of course: she was in this character quite an enthusiast and extremely affecting. Her feelings seemed to be sublimed by piety. She endured the stern tyranny of her husband, with a graceful acquiescence and a gentle patience, that even added to her dignity. She appeared to have survived every passion but her maternal affection, and that sustained her to the end.

Mr. Kemble acted with Miss Younge, the Count to her Countess of Narbonne — Warwick to her Margaret — Hastings to her Shore — Jaffier to her Belvidera — and to his infinite satisfaction was relieved at length from Sir George Touchwood.

From Dublin he accompanied Miss Younge to Cork; there he opened, as he always preferred doing, in Hamlet, and repeated his usual characters with that lady. When she quitted Cork he performed several of his chief parts, among others the Earl of Essex. It could hardly be expected that he should banish Barry and Mossop from their minds, and the people of Cork ventured to dispute the judgment of the capital.

The favourite characters of Mr. Kemble in Ireland were the Macbeth and Richard, the Hamlet and Orestes. With Mrs. Crawford he acted Glenalvon to her Lady Randolph, Biron to her Isabella, Horatio to her Calista, Edward to her Eleonora, Orestes to her Hermione.

He went with the company to Limerick during the assizes, and there was met and cordially greeted by several of his Dublin friends. In October 1782, the company returned to Dublin, and was strengthened by the addition of Digges. Mrs. Inchbald was also engaged for tragedy. Among the plays got up this season were "All for Love" — Antony, Kemble; Ventidius, Digges. "King Lear" — Lear, Digges; Edgar, Kemble. "Jane Shore" — Hastings, Kemble; Shore, Digges. "Cato" — Cato,

Digges; Juba, Kemble. The "Fair Penitent"—Horatio, Kemble; Sciolto, Digges; Lothario, Daly. Daly now and then prevailed upon Mr. Kemble to strengthen his own performances in comedy. The rival theatre in Crow Street was falling to pieces fast. Ryder had left it—nothing was efficient there but Mrs. Crawford, who occasionally performed, to protract, at all events, the ruin that she could not avert.

Ryder, though a hard, was a useful actor; he performed Iago to Kemble's Othello, and strengthened the cast materially of all their plays. The Castle of Andalusia was immediately got up in Dublin, upon its great success in London, and a little flattened the reign of tragedy. But Mr. Kemble had now established himself with the Irish as an accomplished tragedian, and the fame of Mrs. Siddons's first season in London being the theme of all the higher circles, her brother's benefit was most profitably attended. The gentleman with whose recollections I am now gratifying the public, tells me he remembers dining with him at Capt. Jephson's, in the Castle, during the winter of 1782, in company with Lord Inchiquin, Mr. Tighe, Mr. Gardiner, and several ladies of distinction. After dinner his lordship gave as a toast "The matchless Mrs. Siddons," and drawing from his finger a ring, sent it on a salver to Mr. Kemble, desiring his opinion of the likeness. It was a miniature of Mrs. Siddons, set round with diamonds. Daly

was not a man, to whom the great popularity of Kemble could be agreeable. He, very injudiciously as a manager, frequently starved the cause, and got up his plays in a niggard and unhandsome manner. But the unconquerable fortitude of Kemble struggled through all impediments, and the engagement of Mrs. Siddons for the after season, procured even for him better treatment than he had before received, and secured to him the advantage of acting with her, Biron, Philotas, Jaffier, Hastings, &c.

The neighbourhood of learning is always friendly to taste. I have no doubt it is materially owing to the University and to Trinity College, that the inhabitants of Edinburgh and Dublin are among the most enlightened admirers of the drama. Upon the amazing success of Mrs. Siddons during her first season in London, Mr. Daly came over himself, and secured her in the summer of 1783 for Dublin. She declined, therefore, a number of offered engagements in this country, and signed with him an article to perform a limited number of nights, for which she was to receive £600: and accordingly she made her first appearance on the Dublin stage on the 20th of June, in the character of Isabella — her second character was Belvidera — her third, Jane Shore. I have said that there was a strong nationality there: it shewed itself in the competition between herself and Mrs. Crawford. The latter lady, it will be remembered, had many claims

upon the Irish feeling. She had been the wife of the greatest ornament of their stage, Spranger Barry, Esq., and had been associated with him, as the delightful heroine, who had aided him in his brilliant career. His loss had in a manner rendered her the depository of all their affection, and very ardent it was ; so that in Dublin, I believe, at that time, Mrs. Siddons but divided the crown with her.

From Dublin Mrs. Siddons went to Cork, and took Mr. Kemble with her ; and it was, I incline to think, there that the engagement was negotiated for Drury Lane, which brought Mr. Kemble to the proper scene of abilities like his. Before I leave the subject of his performances in Ireland, I feel myself called upon to notice a subsequent imputation, that my friend had in a great degree formed himself upon Digges in tragedy. As I saw Mr. Digges in Caratach, and in Wolsey, in Cato, and in some other characters, so I have a most perfect remembrance of his style of acting. But, in honest truth, the gentlemen might as well have asserted that he formed himself upon the late George Cooke. Digges had, like Cooke, no grace in the management of his person ; but he had a very bold and manly exterior, and touched occasionally the chords of pity with a master-hand. That inimitable sketch of our native hero, in Fletcher's Bonduca, never has been entirely filled up, but by Digges. His seasonable rebukes of the Queen, who put "too much

wind to her sail" — his praise of the Romans, one of the finest things in our language — his love of the youthful Hengo — his agony at his wretched fate : these were things to which Mr. Kemble could not be insensible ; for he passionately loved fine acting, and scientific acting ; and knew well the extent of Mr. Digges's powers. But he really only resembled him in the strong feeling they both had of genuine character, and sound composition.

In the *Wolsey*, something of Digges's pride of deportment might be fancied — but the great distinction was that, though Digges more resembled the actual person of the cardinal, Kemble had more of the churchman in both the elevation and declension of that character. His piety was better mixed up with his pride in the one, and more strikingly supported him in the other.

Among the attractions of the Irish stage, in 1783, was to be numbered the late Mrs. Crouch, then the lovely and enchanting Miss Phillips, who, attended by her father, and recommended to Windham by Dr. Johnson, had gone over to try the success of her musical talents. Her beauty was the theme of every tongue ; her voice was one of the sweetest that had ever been heard. Her success was correspondent. Mr. Kemble became intimately acquainted with them. Mr. Phillips was a man of letters, whose conversation was of the greatest value. He had seen all the chief ornaments of the



stage in past times, and welcomed the young rival of their fame, whose ultimate rank in the art he with the fullest confidence predicted. Miss Phillips was quite delighted with his acting, and Mr. Kemble certainly felt the power of her beauty. When, many years after, we used to talk together about this lovely woman, and the grave had swallowed all but the memory of what she was — his former admiration fully revived, and he spoke of her, as he could *well* speak, of one for whom he had every kind, every good, and every tender feeling. And when I had written, at Mr. Kelly's desire, the inscription upon her tomb at Brighton, Mr. Kemble one day called upon me, and, as we walked out together, said to me, "Boaden, I have just read  
" an inscription upon Mrs. Crouch's monument.  
" As I feel every word of it, and know that I did  
" not write it myself, I know only one other  
" man from whom it could proceed, and you are  
" he."

The London papers suggested a marriage between them in Dublin in the year 1783; it was even affirmed to have taken place; but I believe Miss Phillips neither received nor desired any attentions from Mr. Kemble but those of very zealous friendship, perhaps a little romantic on his side. It will be seen that he was ready to risk his life for her, by the following anecdote: at the same time, I know that charms of much less value would

have received from his manliness the same protection.

They were at Cork at the time, and Miss Phillips was the subject of general admiration. Her father was confined by the gout, and had requested Mr. Kemble to conduct his daughter home from the theatre, until he should be able to attend her himself. One evening, some young officers belonging to a regiment quartered in that city, chose to contend for the honour of seeing her safe to her lodgings; and accordingly, when she went to her dressing-room, stationed themselves in the passage through which she was obliged to return. They there entered into a loud and somewhat fierce dispute, who should have the honour of being her conductor, and the terrified beauty locked her door. Mr. Kemble sent at this juncture to inform her, that he was waiting for her. She replied to his messenger, through the door, that she would not leave her room, until the officers had quitted the theatre, as she was resolved not to pass them. Upon this intimation, they were politely desired to withdraw, as the doors of the theatre were going to be shut. They said "they would not leave the house until Miss Phillips did, as they were waiting to conduct her." Mr. Kemble hearing this, took his sword, and passing through them said, with dignity and firmness, "Gentlemen, Mr. Phillips, who is confined by illness, has requested me to conduct

“ his daughter from the theatre ; and, as gentlemen, I trust you will not molest her ; for, be assured, I will maintain the trust reposed in me.” He then called Miss Phillips, and told her that her father would be anxious for her return ; that it was late, and he was confident she would pass without interruption. At length she ventured forth, but at the sight of the officers was about to retreat again to her dressing room. Mr. Kemble, however, held her fast, and audibly said, “ Be under no apprehension, I am resolved to protect you. If any gentleman is dissatisfied with my behaviour, I will meet him, if he pleases, to-morrow morning, and if he can *prove* it to be wrong, I shall be ready to apologize for it.”

He led her then quietly through the passage, uninterrupted by her gay persecutors. The commanding officer, however, had heard of the confusion thus occasioned, and the next day called upon Mr. Phillips, to express his concern at the conduct of the preceding night, and to assure them, that every proper apology should be made. Miss Phillips told him, with her usual *naïveté*, that “ she would have no apology ; all that she required was, that the gentlemen in future would go from the theatre with the rest of the audience, and leave her to return home quietly with her father, or with the person whom he might appoint to conduct her.”

Her wishes were respectfully and faithfully complied with. Kemble's conduct on this occasion was admired by every body. But it was attributed to his *passion* for the young lady; and the talk of their union seemed now to have a declared sanction in his own behaviour.

## CHAP. III.

MR. KEMBLE ARRIVES IN TOWN.—STATE OF OUR THEATRES AS TO TALENT. — DRURY-LANE. — SMITH. — FINE GENTLEMAN IN COMEDY. — CHANGE OF MANNERS. — ITS EFFECTS UPON FORMER COMEDIES. — JOHN PALMER. — DODD. — BENSLEY. — KING. — PARSONS. — THE CRITIC. — ITS FIRST NIGHT. — MORAL SENSITIVENESS OF THE AUDIENCE. — SHERIDAN AN UNEXPECTED IMITATOR OF DR. BARROW. — THE PASSAGES COMPARED.

AT the period when Mr. Kemble arrived in the metropolis, our theatres could boast many distinguished ornaments of the stage. He did not come to throw light upon obscurity, but he added a new and brilliant planet to the host that shed their lustre upon our evening pleasures. The great master of the art had formed in his own theatre some very respectable artists, who, from a long habit of acting together, had rendered their performances very smooth and attractive; and although no one actor greatly predominated, yet together, they gave evidence that they had been well disciplined, that rehearsals had not been spared, and that every advantage had been drawn from the existing materials.

Mr. Smith certainly occupied a very distinguished station in the theatre, and his merits though peculiar were of no common order. In tragedy he performed most of the first rate characters with great energy, but, I think, not much discrimination. He made no mark upon peculiar portions of the dialogue—he lifted no beauties of expression into prominence—there was no light and shade in his manner. One uniform cadence seemed in him able to convey the most striking opposites of sentiment and character.

It was consequently never objected to him that he ventured upon new readings, or any readings. He spoke the obvious meaning of the text, and satisfied common auditors; and this he did in one unvaried song, in a tone of measured power. His articulation was not nice; indeed, from some compression of the organs, what he uttered in tragedy, always seemed laborious and even painful.

But all that was outside was fair and noble. His deportment was dignified and manly—his action graceful, and never redundant. Nature had denied to him that first of all requisites an expressive countenance, yet was he certainly a handsome man, and an elegant stage figure. In tragedy he might be said just barely to *keep* his place—in comedy there was nobody qualified to *take* it.

The fine gentleman in comedy was then very different from what it has since become—it was regulated by higher manners, and seemed indeed

born in polished life and educated in drawing-rooms. The dress kept the performer up to the character. It was necessary to wear the sword, and to manage it gracefully. As the hair was dressed and powdered, the hat was supported under the arm. The mode of approaching the lady was more respectful; and it required the most delicate address to lead and seat her upon the stage. It will be recollected that ladies wore the hoop, and in all the brilliancy of court dress, appeared very formidable beings. The flippancy of the modern style makes a bow look like a mockery: it does not seem naturally to belong to a man in pantaloons and a plain blue coat, with a white or a black waistcoat.

I cannot doubt that what is called genteel comedy, among us, suffers greatly from the comparative undress of our times. What can you do, for instance, with such a comedy as the *Careless Husband*? Its dialogue could never proceed from the fashionables of the *present* day — different times can only be signified by difference of costume. Should we therefore venture back to the lace and embroidery, the swords and bags of the last age? I think not: the difference from our present costume would excite a laugh. What is the result unfortunately? — We drop, or impoverish the comedies.

That profound philosopher, Mr. Burke, has somewhere observed the reason why these comedies in

higher life are so pleasing. Generally speaking it should seem, that such a mode of existence was too artificial, and therefore not so fit for painting, as deficient in character, and consisting of little more than lords and footmen, ladies and their waiting maids. But he adds, “ I have observed that persons, and especially women, in lower life and of no breeding, are fond of such representations — it seems like *introducing them into good company*, and the honour compensates the dulness of the entertainment.”\*

Here is therefore a mode of existence purely artificial, stript at once of all its external illusions. In their dress, at least, the characters are sunken to common life ; and the charm of being, as it were, introduced into good company is taken from the great bulk of the spectators — they are therefore sure of the dulness, but neither feel nor fancy any of the honour, which without any such design the poet gave them as the compensation.

Palmer, in comedy, assumed the refined manners I have been describing with great ease, but they were assumed : he seemed to me to have attained the station, rather than to have been born to it. In his general deportment he had a sort of elaborate grace and stately superiority, which he affected on all occasions, with an accompaniment

\* Hints for an Essay on the Drama. Works, vol. v. 4to. p. 433.



of the most plausible politeness. He was the same on and off the stage — he was constantly *acting* the man of superior accomplishments. This it was that rendered Palmer so exquisite in High Life below Stairs. He was *really* my Lord Duke's footman, *affecting* the airs and manners of his master — and here was the difference between him and Dodd, who from the radical gentility of his fops, became in the kitchen the real Sir Harry, instead of his coxcomb and impudent valet.

Palmer, however, was an actor of infinite address, and sustained a very important line of business in the company. He was a man of great expence and luxurious habits, perfectly irreclaimable, and usually negligent ; but he would throw up his eyes with astonishment that he had lost the word, or cast them down with penitent humility, wipe his lips with his eternal white handkerchief to smother his errors, and bow himself out of the greatest absurdities that continued idleness could bring upon him.

If Palmer was not the first of tragedians, he was one of the most useful — the tyrants came to him from his stately deportment ; the villains from his insidious and plausible address. His Stukely yielded only to his Joseph Surface. But he was not confined in tragedy to the tyrannic or the designing ; his Villeroy, in the Fatal Marriage, had a delicate and hopeless ardour of affection, that made it a decided impossibility for Isabella to resist him — he seemed a being expressly provided by fate, to wind

about that lovely victim the web of inextricable misery.

In all that Palmer did you saw that he had the greatest mastery over his art. He walked the stage like no other man, and seemed made for his profession. Practice was I believe nearly all his study. In his closet he did little; but experience shewed him what was still wanting in his efforts, and he became at length one of the most general favourites that the stage had ever known. If Sir Fretful be right in his assertion (which I do not presume to doubt,) that "the women are the best judges" after all," Palmer certainly bore away the palm of their decided and lasting preference.

Dodd, with more confined powers, was one of the most perfect actors that I have ever seen. He was the fopling of the *drama* rather than the age. I mean by this, that his own times rarely shewed us anything so highly charged with the vanity of personal exhibition. He was, to be sure, the prince of pink heels, and the soul of empty eminence. As he tottered rather than walked down the stage, in all the protuberance of endless muslin and lace in his cravats and frills, he reminded you of the jutting motion of the pigeon. His action was suited to his figure. He took his snuff, or his bergamot, with a delight so beyond all grosser enjoyments, that he left you no doubt whatever of the superior happiness of a coxcomb.

The modern fop is a creature of a different kind

— he is pert and volatile, incessantly in action, and becoming risible by awkward gestures and mere grimace. He has no dignity to keep up ; you may laugh not only at him but in his face. Besides he is usually taken from low life, and is a caricature rather than a character.

But Dodd was not confined to the *beau monde*, he could enter into the humours of a distant age, and exhibit the fatuity of the GULL, with a truth and richness, that left every rival at an immense distance. I need only to remind his spectators of his Sir Andrew Aguecheek, in the Twelfth Night, and relate a simple fact to which I was a witness. The late Mr. Edwin went into the pit of Drury-Lane expressly to see Dodd, before he himself appeared in Sir Andrew. On his coming out he exclaimed to a friend, “ This is indeed perfection ! I “ cannot touch him in his own way ; but I hope, “ at all events, to do something.” I saw Mr. Edwin in the character. He was in that, as in every thing, quite irresistible ; but the smoothness, the native imbecility of Dodd’s Sir Andrew were transcendent. Edwin could not entirely reach that paragon of folly, to whom a common expression is a problem ; who cannot conceive the meaning of *accost* ; speaks four or five languages word for word without book, and demands what is *pourquoy*. Has the back trick simply as strong as any man in Illyria, plays on the viol de gambo, and goes to church in a cor-ranto. No, Sir Toby, these things were *not* hidden ;

they were the only lights that shone through Dodd's Sir Andrew, and the most sportive malice could not render him more ridiculous, than he came forth from the forming hands of nature.

Mr. Bensley here offers himself to my recollection as the only perfect representative of another character in the same comedy ; the smiling, yellow stockened, and cross-gartered Malvolio. All his peculiarities of deportment here aided his exhibition of the steward—the sliding zig-zag advance and retreat of his figure fixed the attention to his stockings and his garters. His constrained smile, his hollow laugh, his lordly assumption, and his ineffable contempt of all that opposed him in the way to greatness were irresistibly diverting.

In that amazing production of dramatic science, the Fox, Mr. Bensley gave to the fine fly, the parasite Mosca, what no other actor in my time could pretend to give, and seemed in truth, like the character, to come back to us from a former age. He spoke Ben Jonson's language, as if he had never been accustomed to a lighter and less energetic diction, and with the Volpone of Palmer and the Corbaccio of Parsons, presented a feast to the visitors of Colman's theatre, which has seldom been equalled, and will I believe never be surpassed.

In Pierre Mr. Bensley distinguished himself greatly ; and his Iago, if it yielded to any, yielded only to the profound skill of Henderson. His voice had something superhuman in its tone, and his cadence was lofty and imposing. If I had been

suddenly asked what Bensley was most like, I should have said, a creature of our poet's fancy, Prospero. In that part he was in truth a mighty magician, and the awful accents that he poured out seemed of power to wake sleepers from their graves, and to control those who possessed an absolute mastery over the elements. There was a very delicate and nice discrimination in Bensley, when he addressed his daughter, and the spirit Ariel. They were not two young ladies of the theatre, to whom he announced his pleasure in one common tone of command. He lowered himself parentally to Miranda's innocence and inexperience: it was evidently by his *art* that he raised himself to the control of the spirit Ariel; with whom a kind of personal attachment seemed to mitigate the authority by which that gentlest of his kind was kept in a yet unwilling allegiance. Our own day has shewn us an Ariel, who almost realizes the delicate imagination of the poet.\*

From Prospero, who called spirits from their confines, it is but a step to the awful shade of Hamlet's father. No man in my judgment ever delivered his harrowing tale so terribly as Mr. Bensley.

“ This was no MORTAL business, nor no sound,

“ That the EARTH ow'd.”

I avail myself of the present opportunity to say that, much as has been done in the way of scenic illusion, much is still to do for both Prospero and

\* Miss Trcc.

the royal shade of Denmark. Neither of them are yet rightly drest: the first is but a conjurer with a wand; the second but a son of earth, clothed in the solid armour of the warrior. I know how common it is to say, "these are beings of the imagination, and they must be left to it." But I think it is in the power of the stage, to do something, even in representations of this kind, to prevent that dreary plunge of the fancy down to common place reality. A greater attention to a few known principles of the sublime would easily effect this.

There was a line of character in comedy of which Mr. Bensley was by far the ablest representative — the class of satirists, like Scandal in *Love for Love*, Manly in the *Plain Dealer*, and Sir Clement Flint, which I have seen him play with pleasure, after the great original, King. It was quite delightful to hear his beautiful apostrophe to Lady Emily — that lady observe was Miss Farren: "And there she stands; with sensibility and vivacity so uncommonly blended, that they extract benevolence wherever it exists, and create it where it never was before." The audience applied this praise, as the author intended them to do, as not more characteristic of Lady Emily, than of the charming actress by whom that lovely being was represented. Mr. King uttered this with his usual neatness, but I thought him hard compared with Bensley.

Mr. King, though very confined in his powers, was one of the most perfect actors that ever graced the stage. His peculiar sententious manner made

him seek, and indeed require, dialogue of the greatest point. The language of common parlance was not for his mouth. He converted every thing into epigram; and although no man's utterance was more rapid, yet the *ictus* fell so smartly upon the point, his tune was so perfect, and the members of his sentences were so well antagonized, that he spoke all such composition with more effect than any man of his time. Those who remember his delivery of Touchstone's degrees of the lie, and Puff's recapitulation of his own mendicant and literary arts, will have no difficulty in assenting to my remark. It was this quality that rendered him the very best speaker of prologues and epilogues that was ever heard. His manner added to the keenness of the rhymed couplet, and he presented the successive pictures of the ludicrous with so much truth, and without stooping in the least to mimicry, that his forty lines on such occasions composed a little drama perfect in itself, which had a charm independent of its relation to the play it accompanied.

He was at home in the arch and impudent Valet, who shares his master's imperfections with his confidence, and governs him by his utility. A character, which I do not think belongs to our manners as a nation, and seems imported from the French stage, but never naturalized among us.

Nothing approached him in the dry and timid habitual bachelor, drawn into the desperate union with youth and beauty and gaiety. His Sir Peter

Teazle was a master-piece. The hen-peckt and observant husband too was a character closely suited to his powers. In Lord Ogleby, he exceeded all that could be desired, and outran, I should think, by many degrees, the poet's fondest expectations. To personate such a character, King must have known it. Among the debauchees of fashion he had probably seen some battered follower of the graces, whose "way of life had fallen "into the scar the yellow leaf," but who would struggle still to hide the wrinkles on his forehead with the verdant chaplet of youth. This character proceeded from the hand of a master, and was embodied by King with a truth and identity, of which it were vain, perhaps, to seek an equal example in the whole compass of the drama. I yet seem to hear him in that delirium of ecstasy to Lovewell in the fourth act :

*L. Ogle.* I never was in such exquisite enchanting company, since my heart first conceived, or my senses tasted pleasure.

*Love.* Where are they, my lord? (*Looking about.*)

*L. Ogle.* In my mind, Sir.

*Love.* What company have you there, my lord? (*Smiling.*)

*L. Ogle.* My own ideas, Sir, which so crowd upon my imagination, and kindle it to such a delirium of ecstasy, that wit, wine, music, poetry, all combined, and each perfection, are but mere mortal shadows of my felicity.

A strong principle of association sometimes felt, and frequently unperceived, combines the subjects of our thought. Parsons is associated with King in our recollections by their constantly aiding each other in the drama. And a more powerful support



of the interest of the scene than Parsons must never be expected to arise. He was formed to excite laughter, and although he would sometimes sport with those about him, and enjoy his triumph over their muscles, yet, generally speaking, he was a faithful delineator of character.

He had a figure, a gait, a countenance, a voice, that marked him out as the actor of old men in comedy. Whether he exhibited their avarice or their fondness, their insensibility or their weakness, he never lost the character for a moment.

I cannot pursue him through the long list of parts which he retained; (for whatever he once touched became his property during life;) but I will just notice a few of his most prominent performances, as they start up in my memory. His Foresight was a perfect thing; and his Corbaccio in the Fox astonished and delighted the best judges in the art. His deafness in this wretched cormorant was truth itself — his eager expectation of Volpone's decease — his villanous temptations of Mosca, and his miserable delight at every succeeding invention of the Parasite, were above all praise. Nor was his expression confined to his face, amply as the features did their office; but every passion circulated in him to the extremities, and spoke in the motion of his feet or the more striking intelligence of his hands: the latter became the claws of a harpy, when they crawled over the parchment, which blasted all his hopes, by shewing that Mosca had become the heir of Volpone, instead of himself.

He was a master in the exhibition of vulgar importance. His *Alscrip* in the *Heiress* was ludicrous in the extreme — and Miss Pope was his genuine descendant. Old Doiley in Mrs. Cowley's pleasant Farce of *Who's the Dupe* yielded him ample scope for his talents; but it was perhaps reserved for Sheridan to shew the utmost that Parsons could achieve, in *Sir Fretful Plagiary* in the *Critic*. I have repeatedly enjoyed this rich treat, and became sensible how painful laughter might be, when such a man as Parsons chose to throw his whole force into a character. When he stood under the castigation of *Sneer*, affecting to enjoy criticisms, which made him writhe in agony; when the tears were in his eyes, and he suddenly checked his unnatural laugh, to enable him to stare aghast upon his tormentors; a picture was exhibited of mental anguish and frantic rage, of mortified vanity and affected contempt, which would almost deter an author from the pen, unless he could be sure of his firmness under every possible provocation.

Perhaps it may a little diversify my page, if I here interpose some remarks of a merely critical nature upon the *Critic* itself. It seems quite clear to me that *Sir Fretful* should have been the author of the tragedy rehearsed, and not *Puff*. The former was a person to whom such a production might fairly have been imputed.—The pertinacity of *Sir Fretful*, and his resentment at the liberties taken with his muse, would have been infinitely more relished, than such feelings could be in *Puff*;

who, besides, has shewn himself so shrewd an observer of life, and given so masterly a detail of his own literary efforts, that HE cannot be supposed capable of the childish burlesque, which is to pass upon us as a tragedy written with a serious intention.

If in addition, Sir Fretful, had been given secretly to understand that Puff was the real author of the character of him, which Sneer had just pretended to repeat — and he had allowed him to be present at his rehearsal, to secure his aid as a critic ; — between his resentment and his alarm, his petulance and his obsequiousness, a rehearsal of Sir *Fretful's* play would indeed have defied all gravity.

While I am on the subject of the Critic, let me record a remarkable instance of the keen sense of moral tendency in our audiences. On the first night of the piece, Puff entered abruptly upon his arts of assailing the charitable and humane, and those whom Providence had blest with affluence. The indignation of the audience here testified an apprehension that the best feeling of our nature might be chilled and checked by too marked an exposure of the impositions practised to excite it. The author found it necessary to insert a few lines (not printed) by which Puff disclaimed the wish “ to deaden our feelings or lessen our humanity. “ To put us on our guard, was, it seemed, essentially “ to serve the cause of true charity.” If the hearts of the audience were subdued by the apology, their judgment was reversed without a reason. The

greatest moralists have taught, that the advantage to ourselves is the cultivation of benevolence into habit. Much reflection, and too close enquiry, leave time for the selfish passions to stop the charitable impulse. The man who deliberates will generally button up his pocket. Moreover, there is usually some distress where there is supplication. It may not be actually what it pretends; but let us not teach distrust upon system, lest it end in producing a habit of denial. There are many compensations for mistaken charity, none for hardness of heart.

It was not commonly supposed that Sheridan was a diligent reader of Dr. Barrow. Among the many admirable things, in the writings of that learned divine, is a definition of facetiousness. The late professor Porson once transcribed this into a small pocket volume of writing-paper, in the way of a running text at the top of the page: intending to exemplify its positions from the copious stores of ancient and modern literature. I know not how far he had proceeded in the design, but such a tract would be a most interesting and tasteful accession to our elementary works. In the analysis which Sheridan gives of the PUFF OBLIQUE, or puff by implication, there is a striking resemblance to this masterly definition of facetiousness — the manner of putting the points is similar, and the cadence of the language is particularly imitated. This is Sheridan: —

“ As to the PUFF OBLIQUE, OR PUFF BY IMPLI-

“ CATION, it is too various and extensive to be illustrated by an instance ; it attracts in titles and presumes in patents ; it lurks in the *limitation* of a subscription, and invites in the assurance of crowd and incommodation at public places ; it delights to draw forth concealed merit, with a most disinterested assiduity ; and sometimes wears a countenance of smiling censure and tender reproach. — It has a wonderful memory for parliamentary debates, and will often give the whole speech of a favoured member with the most flattering accuracy. But, above all, it is a great dealer in reports and suppositions. It has the earliest intelligence of intended preferments that will reflect *honor* on the *patrons* ; and embryo promotions of modest gentlemen — who know nothing of the matter themselves. It can hint a ribband for implied services, in the air of a common report ; and with the carelessness of a casual paragraph, suggest officers into commands — to which they have no pretensions but their wishes. This, Sir, is the last principal class of the THE ART OF PUFFING — an art, which I hope you will now agree with me, is of the highest dignity — yielding a tablature of benevolence and public spirit ; befriending equally trade, gallantry, criticism and politics : the applause of genius ! the register of charity ! the triumph of heroism ! the self-defence of contractors ! the fame of orators ! and

“ the gazette of ministers ! ” — *Critic*, 1781. p. 44.  
Now for Dr. Barrow’s definition of facetiousness : —

“ It is indeed a thing so versatile and multiform,  
“ that it seemeth no less hard to settle a clear and  
“ certain notion thereof, than to make a portrait of  
“ Proteus, or to define the figure of the fleeting  
“ air. Sometimes it lieth in pat allusion to a  
“ known story, or in seasonable application of a  
“ trivial saying, or in forging an apposite tale :  
“ sometimes it playeth in words and phrases, taking  
“ advantage from the ambiguity of their sense, or  
“ the affinity of their sound : sometimes it is wrapped  
“ in a dress of humorous expression ; sometimes it  
“ lurketh under an odd similitude ; sometimes it  
“ is lodged in a sly question, in a smart answer, in  
“ a quirkish reason, in a shrewd intimation ; in  
“ cunningly diverting or cleverly retorting an  
“ objection : sometimes it is couched in a bold  
“ scheme of speech, in a tart irony, in a lusty  
“ hyperbole, in a startling metaphor ; in a plausible  
“ reconciling of contradictions, or in acute non-  
“ sense : sometimes a scenical representation of  
“ persons or things, a counterfeit speech, a mimi-  
“ cal look or gesture passeth for it : sometimes an  
“ affected simplicity, sometimes a presumptuous  
“ bluntness gives it being — often it consisteth in  
“ one knows not what, and springeth up one can  
“ hardly tell how. Its ways are unaccountable  
“ and inexplicable, being answerable to the num-  
“ berless roving of fancy and windings of lan-

“ guage. — It raiseth admiration as signifying  
 “ a nimble sagacity of apprehension, a special  
 “ felicity of invention, a vivacity of spirit, and  
 “ reach of wit more than vulgar: it procureth  
 “ delight by gratifying curiosity with its rareness  
 “ or semblance of difficulty: by diverting the mind  
 “ from its road of serious thoughts; by instilling  
 “ gayety and airiness of spirit; by provoking to  
 “ such dispositions of spirit in way of emulation  
 “ or complaisance; and by seasoning matters,  
 “ otherwise distasteful or insipid, with an unusual  
 “ and thence grateful tang.” — *Second Sermon on  
 Evil Speaking.* Edition, 1678. p. 44.\*

It is thus that one genius uses, and is entitled to use, the writings of another. It was thus, that Reynolds studied and resembled the great masters in painting of another age. I am happy in the present opportunity of comparing Sheridan with a mind fertile in every topic of wisdom, and flowing in all the felicities of neat and pointed expression. Barrow is the man whom Charles the Second called the most unfair of preachers, as he left, on all subjects, nothing for any other to say.

I here put an end to what may be thought a rather distant excursion; but every admirer of the drama is interested to know whatever had a tendency to carry to perfection the brilliant powers of Sheridan.

\* Here is an *accidental* parity also — the very PAGES are the same of the two passages.

## CHAP. IV.

COVENT GARDEN. — LEWIS. — WROUGHTON. — F. AICKIN. — QUICK. — EDWIN. — HENDERSON. — HIS ANALYTIC POWER EXEMPLIFIED IN STERNE, IN FAÏSTAFF. — SPORTIVE INVENTIONS IN PRIVATE. — GARRICK AND DR. JOHNSON. — THE ODE ON SHAKSPEARE. — HIS READINGS. — THE IMPRESSION LEFT UPON THE AUTHOR'S MIND. — THE LEADING ACTRESSES. — MISS FARREN. — DELICACY HER GREAT FEATURE. — MISS POPE. — MRS. ABINGTON. — HER *ENJOUEMENT* ON THE STAGE. — MRS. MATTOCKS. — MISS YOUNGE.

I SHALL pass to the other theatre, to consider the actors who were there prominent about the time of Mr. Kemble's arrival in London. When the male talent has been thus estimated at both theatres, I shall endeavour to paint the less definable traits of the great actresses in both tragedy and comedy.

The youthful hero at Covent Garden Theatre was at this time sustained by Mr. Lewis, a name with which a croud of delightful impressions is associated. Lewis, the sprightly, the gay, the exhilarating, the genteel; the animating soul of modern, and of much of ancient comedy. The charm of this really fine actor, was in his animal spirits. As a speaker he totally failed. He had no distinctness, no measure in his utterance. He hur-



ried as much of a sentence together as he could deliver in a breath, and stopped where the verbal connexion of what he said required him to go on. Sentiment therefore from him was often unintelligible ; and all antithetical composition lost its balance and point.

In action he was redundant to a fault. He was the most restless of human beings. He kept up a perpetual flicker before the eye, and seemed to exact an almost exclusive attention. As our theatres became larger, this was rendered in some degree necessary — there was a great space to fill, and without infinite expression of the face, an actor who did not bustle was totally without effect. The tendency of Lewis, just mentioned, rendered him rather insensible to the great results of combination in the scene. The authors who wrote for him with most success found it their interest rather to send him on as a kind of comedy harlequin, whose incessant activity was to fill the scene ; and whose tricks of love, mistake, extravagance, or generosity, were to surprise or fascinate the senses, without the slightest appeal to the understanding.

But how am I to describe him in what they received for tragedy — “ when he curled his hair,  
“ wore gloves in his cap, coursed his own shadow  
“ for a traitor, and five fiends seemed to be in poor  
“ Tom at once.” Here it was too, that the strange huddling of his words upon one another had a ludicrous or distressing effect, as the auditor’s mind

was disposed. The mimic will hardly ever lose the way in which he uttered the taunt of Percy to Douglas in the tragedy of Percy.

Hear this — ye knights, companions — of his fortune !  
That Douglas! the valiant — the renowned Douglas,  
Fenc'd round with guards, and safe — in his own *castle* !  
Surpriz'd a knight — unarm'd — and bravely — slew him.

What there was to redeem these imperfections, was to be found in his genteel deportment and earnest manner — his attention to the business of the scene, and the fire he threw into some situations, suited to his abilities. If the action did not interest, it never hung with Lewis ; and some way or other even the tragedy of this actor helped “to fill a  
“ pit, as well as that of better men.”

But it were a waste of time to expose this false and idle exhibition of tragedy. The good sense of the actor laid down the buskin, when, as the manager, he might still have retained it ; and he confined himself to what nobody ever wished him to resign — to Mercutio, and the Copper Captain — to Ranger, to Belcour, and the long list of sparkling adventurers, in the airy comedies of O'Keefe, Reynolds, and Morton.

Wroughton, with requisites entirely dissimilar, was the rival, or rather, the antagonist of Lewis in the scene. His person was ill made, his face round and swoln, his features small and inexpressive — his voice uncertain, hoarse, and disagreeable.

However, a certain consequence invested his deportment. He was never vacant or idle. He never neglected himself or his audience. Always perfect, always where he should be, exciting no censure, and challenging but little applause, he yet kept a respectable station in tragedy, and I have seen him bold enough to touch, after Garrick, that hopeless part, King Lear.

There is in acting what may be called, a *safe* line. It is the doing common and traditional things in a common way; without pretending to original conception, or any refinements of execution. If a great genius arise during such a leaden reign, to be sure he covers such vulgar stuff with confusion, and hands it over to speedy oblivion. I think Mr. Wroughton was even to be *admired* in the plain gentlemen of comedy, whether impassioned or considerate. There was good sense, good manners, and not the slightest affectation in his performances.

Mr. F. Aickin was a sensible speaker, firm, articulate, and impressive, without the tenderness of his brother James, and with little or no variety. His characters were all nearly of the same kind in tragedy, and he usually acted the tyrants, though his look was uniformly benevolent, and his deportment that of a staid and most reasonable personage. In comedy, where any father was exhibited, that was neither to be duped by the one

sex, nor laughed at by the other, Aickin represented that rare character.

I have often reflected with indignation upon the vicious taste of a public, that can bear this eternal outrage upon decency, the ridicule thrown in our comedies upon the parental character. But it is, I fear, the unavoidable result of plays constructed upon the tender passion; where the art and mystery of defeating caution, or betraying confidence, is taught in the highest perfection.

Quick had most generally the honour to sustain the testy old gullable personage just alluded to. I do not think there was much discrimination in the way he played such characters. There was the same constantly florid face—the same compression of the mouth and elevation of the eyebrows, the same shrill squeak in the utterance, and odd totter in the step; but his entrance was invariably the signal for honest hearty merriment.

To this general effect of Quick's acting, an important circumstance in his theatrical life most powerfully contributed. He was beyond all comparison, in comedy, the decided favourite of the late KING, a determined patron of the stage, whom for so many of my best years, it delighted me to see, with his family, enjoying himself in the midst of his people. There was a gay and hearty jocularity about the King while sitting at a comedy, which a Cynic could hardly have resisted—a something so endearing to see greatness relaxing

from its state, throwing off, and apparently glad to throw off, some of the trammels of royalty, and exhibiting, without the least restraint, a full sense of pleasure, at a liberal and enlightened amusement.

Quick's powers of entertainment were not confined to the stage—he told a story admirably. The late King sometimes had him in attendance at Buckingham house; and the little time he could spare from the various business that pressed upon him, he delighted to pass in listening to Quick's eccentricities. He frequently appointed to see him in the riding-house, and took his amusement and his exercise together.

Edwin, as a comedian, seemed born to give effect to the farces of O'Keefe. The Son-in-Law and Peeping Tom merit particular attention. His Bowkit, the dancing-master, was surely the most characteristic exhibition that could be imagined; it made the Son-in-Law one of the most attractive farces of modern times. Peeping Tom, however, had one scene more masterly than any thing I have seen in farce: I mean that of poor Tom's abstraction, while in his mind's eye, he sees the whole procession of Lady Godiva pass before him. This was a thing of pure fancy and infinitely productive. You would have sworn to the succeeding images of this procession—the distant view of the equitation of Godiva—her approach—"her unadorned charms" at last brought fully before his eye, and

the burst of commentary "Talk of a Coronation!" all together produced a revelry of enjoyment, that used to convulse the spectators; and it is a precious recollection of the power of a true comedian.

I know nothing from Edwin, in pure comedy, that exceeded his Sir Hugh Evans — his study of the sword and the word — his ejaculations — his cholers and tremplings of mind — his music; his songs and psalms, neither and yet both, were among the greatest luxuries of the art. The Sir Andrew Aguecheek, though rich, I have already said wanted the perfect finish of Dodd.

Mr. Henderson was at this time, perhaps, the greatest master of the art; he resembled his illustrious predecessor in his versatility. His tragedy, however, was certainly inferior to his comedy. In the former he had comparatively fewer requisites. His understanding was of the highest order, and his feelings could be instantaneously excited; but his person was without either dignity or grace, and his eye, though well placed for expression, wanted colour, as his face, though rather handsome, was too fleshy to shew all the muscular action, in which expression resides. He was neglectful too of such aids as might have been had to his figure. He paid not the slightest attention to costume, and was indifferent even as to the neatness or fitting of his dress. He affected to care nothing about it. He pleased himself that he could at length make you forget the want which needed not to have existed.

All his excellencies were perfectly concomitant with propriety of dress. Had he studied appearance, his Lear might have been *venerable*. Although his Hamlet could not be the "mould of form," it might easily have been "the glass of fashion;" but he never looked even to the linings of the suit he wore; and once boasted that he had played, I think, ten characters consecutively, in the same coat. His conceptions were grand, and beautiful, and just; but they were often baffled by his execution of them. When Henderson's Lear was first discovered, he looked like Falstaff sitting as Henry the Fourth; and when Lear speaks in his sleep, and fancying himself on the point of gaining the battle, exclaims, "charge, charge upon the flank," the tones were exactly those with which Falstaff encourages Hal in the combat with Percy; and excited a titter from so unsuitable a recollection. He had indeed made Falstaff his own, and the jolly knight seemed rather too kindly to have returned the compliment: for that vast soul of humour more or less informed all his other characters.

The power of Henderson was analytic. He was not contented with the mere light of common meaning — he shewed it you through a prism, and refracted all the delicate and mingling hues, that enter into the composition of any ray of human character. Besides the philosophic ingenuity of such a design, he had a voice so flexible, that its

tones conveyed all that his meaning would insinuate. I will try at least to make this clearer by an instance, and it shall be taken from a common book, "The Sentimental Journey," which every body has read to *himself*; and few, who have heard Henderson, would, I should think, venture to read to *another*. It opens with this trite remark, "They order this matter, said I, better in France." As it stands it is a plain assertion, nothing more. As Henderson contrived to speak it, you felt, that vanity was trying to take credit for foreign travel, without having stirred from home — that it was not hearsay which he would deliver, but personal experience that he would insinuate. You knew from him distinctly, that it was a truth *finessed*. Let any other reader try this, and he will find what a task he has undertaken, and how little he can do. Often with powers of mimicry, that used to be thought exact, have I tried to give to my ear once more what it received from his utterance; but I am sure that something was wanting in every effort.

He would sometimes delight to shew, without language, the rapid and opposite emotions, as they rise and chace each other in the mind. A masterly effort of this kind was Falstaff's reading the letter from Mrs. Ford in the presence of the "foolish "carrion" Mrs. Quickly. First, you saw, that he had "his belly full of Ford;" — her messenger even was an object of detestation. He glanced over the beginning of the letter, and pished at its apolo-



gies. He turned again to the messenger, to see how her air was in unison with the language of her mistress. The Cudgel of Ford then seemed to fall upon his shoulders, and he shrunk from the enterprise. He read a sentence or two of the letter, — a spark of lechery twinkled in his eye, which turned for confirmation of his hopes upon love's ambassadress — and thus the images of suffering and desire, of alarm and enjoyment, succeeded one another, until at last the oil of incontinency in him settled above the water of the Thames, and the “divinity of odd numbers determined him to risk the *third* adventure.”

In this bow of Ulysses few actors of the present day presume to shoot. Munden once told me, “he had been all his life trying to make up his mind to it.” I am quite sure that he would stand the next to Henderson in the part. But he may, and probably will, close his career, and leave Falstaff unattempted.

While treating of the comic powers of Henderson, I may be allowed to allude to those sportive effusions, which constituted a great charm in his society. One of his scenic inventions was the following. He represented Mr. Garrick in full preparation for the Jubilee at Stratford, calling upon his old master Johnson, to recite to him the Ode to Shakspeare. The Doctor was occupied *sartorice*, repairing some part of his dress — a favourite cat was sporting about his chair; and the apprehensive

author was trying to cover, by his brilliant recitation, the literary defects of his Ode. He gave you the most perfect imitation of Garrick. The critic thundered out his objections, and the writer timidly defended his composition. The sage rejoined with new point and more decisive manner; the reciter fluttered in hopeless and breathless alarm; — and the style of Johnson's criticism was as like, as the voice and action of either pupil or master. I could wish that this effort, in particular, had been taken down, as he delivered it. There have been few imitations of the Johnsonian style of criticism so exact, and none so diverting. The Ode lay sufficiently open to an acute critic, and Henderson had well studied the remarks of the Doctor upon some of the minor poets.

There were many other pleasantries, which my late amiable friend, his widow, used to remind me of, as we sat together reviewing the past — and I frequently requested her to write what she recollected of these *jeux d'esprit*; but I fear nothing was ever done. Who, besides, was there in existence to give them voice and gesture, and preserve, as he did, faithful copies of the distinguished originals? He used to revive his Garrick also in some of the busy scenes of his management. His interviews with ladies of distinction — his interference for them with the box-office; and mixed up a bustle of so much anxiety and smartness, importance and politeness, as shewed the infinite details

of theatrical superintendence in his time, and the restless diligence with which Garrick attended to every thing conducive to his success. I believe most of these exhibitions to have been grounded upon actual occurrences.

While I am thus recalling the charms of Henderson's society, I must not omit those of his occasional readings to his friends, and which the public during Lent enjoyed at Freemason's Hall ; where, with the elder Sheridan, he presented one of the most attic entertainments that was ever given. Henderson read chiefly from Sterne, whom he made very peculiarly his own ; from Swift, from Prior, from Cowper, and a variety of amusing and interesting fugitive pieces, brought by him into general notice, and adorned with flashes of genuine humour, and the most exquisite sensibility. Here I saw, sitting in the front, the graceful form of Mrs. Siddons ; and in her expressive countenance witnessed the triumph of the reader's skill. Lower down in the hall, was the fine and manly figure of Kemble, standing up with fixed attention, to hear from a rival artist, some of the very pieces, which his early efforts had rendered the favourites of other and very different audiences.

Such were the attractions in my early years. They have left impressions never to be effaced. I cannot expect to have many readers, who remember these exhibitions of talent ;—nearly forty years have passed away, since they delighted and in-

structed us : all, therefore, that I can hope to do, is to keep the memory of them alive, till some great and original master of the art arise among us ; that he may catch, from what has been done, the ambition to renew so refined an enjoyment, and redeem us as a people from *minor* amusements, which degrade at once our morals and our taste, and render the chance of better things rather an object of our prayers than our expectations.

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In my remarks upon the leading actresses of the year 1783, I shall first pay my respects to Miss Farren, who in comedy, if not in tragedy, merited the highest distinction. She had succeeded at Drury Lane Theatre to the characters which had been performed by Mrs. Abington ; though it would be difficult to mention two actresses, who differed more essentially in their comic style. They both delighted to exhibit the woman of fashion ; but the character received the differences of its colouring from the personal and mental qualities of the representatives.

Miss Farren, at this time, in her person, was tall and perfectly graceful ; her face was beautiful and expressive ; her voice was rather thin, and of but slender power, but rendered effective by an articulation of the greatest neatness and precision. It was her practice, from the weakness of her organ, to stand rather forward upon the stage.

When I carry my recollection back to the *peculiar* character of her acting, I think I may say that it was distinguished by the grace of *delicacy*, beyond that of every comic actress I have seen. It was as it were the *soul* of all she did ; and even in the comedies of Congreve, she never lost it for a moment, amid the free allusions and sometimes licentious expressions of his dialogue. The eye sparkled with intelligence, but it was a chaste and purified beam, from a mind unsullied though sportive. Her levity therefore was never wanton ; her mirth had no approach to rudeness. She played upon a coxcomb of either sex with the highest zest, but refinement was the invariable attendant upon her ridicule, and taste seemed to preside alike over her action and her utterance.

From her early habit of acting tragedy, she had drawn enough to give to the occasional *pathos* of comedy a charm of infinite value. The reproach of her Julia, in the *Rivals*, to Falkland, was extremely affecting ; and few scenes drew more tears than her sensibility commanded in the return of Lady Townley, to the use of her heart and her understanding. Many years have now elapsed since I first beheld this distinguished lady, but I can safely say, that, in her own line, she has never been equalled, nor approached.

The same thing may be said, and with equal justice, of her usual attendant, Miss Pope, the paragon of chambermaids ; the pert, sly, jocose

Abigail of modern comedy: but her excellence cannot be comprehended in a definition; it was too much like the lightning; it was gone before it could be fixed by either the pencil or the pen. The great respectability of her private life kept her from every taint of vulgarity; her very flippancy had no coarseness, and the utmost decorum and modesty of carriage distinguished her in the long list of her performances.

Mrs. Abington seemed to combine in her excellence the requisites for both the fashionable lady and her maid, and more, much more, than all this. She was the most brilliant satirist of her sex. It is impossible to describe the way in which she spoke the pleasantries of Beatrice; it almost realised the character given of it by Benedick; “If her  
“breath were as terrible as her terminations, there  
“would be no living near her, she would infect to  
“the North Pole. I cannot endure that Lady’s  
“tongue.” There was, in truth, such a tartness in her pleasantry; — she was so fine a speaker of humour, like her friend Tom King, — and they were so suited to each other, that they each lost nearly half their soul in their separation. The ball must be kept up by players of equal skill, for the game to be perfectly played.

There was the most *enjouement* in Mrs. Abington that I have ever seen upon the stage. She had more self-complacency, and seemed more triumphant in her captivations, than any other Lady Betty

of my times. She saw nature through a highly refined medium, and never condescended to vulgar taste. Her acting bore the marks of great application, and was at once surprising and delightful. The modern stage affords but a slight idea of her. However, I have often thought, that, had Mrs. Glover been thrown into high society ; had she been relieved from the encumbrances of family, and possessed full leisure to cultivate her genius, she would have been a very interesting substitute for Mrs. Abington, and, without a question, the first comic actress of the present day. But we seem, most absurdly, to expect the *mature* knowledge of the art from mere youth and beauty ; and are quite astonished that the points of the dialogue are not made, and that the business of the scene has become flat or vapid beyond all parallel. But dramatic speaking is not cultivated as an art among us. Where are the masters? — the models are all gone.

Mrs. Mattocks was a comic actress of whom it is somewhat difficult to attempt a character. In her private manners she was rather refined, and had some of the graceful ease of the old school. On the stage she had a taste for the greatest *breadth* of effect, and excited probably as much laughter as Lewis himself. She was the *patent* representative of all widows of distinction, whether they were discriminated by valuable or mischievous properties. Nor were her chambermaids without the usual

dexterity of the class, and probably with something beyond their usual assurance. She, in these characters, no more resembled Miss Pope of the other theatre, than Lewis did King when acting the same parts.

The vulgar *Malkin*, raised into ludicrous importance, came from Mattocks in genuine coarseness, both of look and deportment. Her voice, on such occasions, was as dissonant as a *saw*, and she converted her natural quick short step and gliding gait into an awkward *hobble* or *jolt*, that seemed studied from the bumkins of a country fair. Her eyes assumed a wide unmeaning stare, and she accompanied what she said with a kind of *idiot giggle*, that was far beyond the reach of every thing like reason. If her mirth was checked on the sudden, and her object defeated, she would burst into a *cry*, sometimes a *scream*, so truly farcical, that she was invaluable to modern writers.

Andrews and Topham in their epilogues used to turn her loose into the CITY, and from gluttony in the alderman to dandyism in the shopman — from the full-blown Lady Mother, and Miss, Mamma's rival and hourly annoyance, to the lowest of the LOW, she finished out the sketch of either sex, and made a couplet frequently unfold a "whole history." She was a sort of *stage HOGARTH* as to the inferior orders of the community; and in her rapid changes they passed before you as in a *camera*,



with all their uncouth gestures and in their natural colours.

It followed from all this, that she never could be *flat* or *heavy* — her spirits were of the buoyant kind ; she kept up the ball with either Lewis or Quick, and was an established favourite to the last. She did not come into either the *Heidelbergs* or *Nurses*, the property of Mrs. Green, and Mrs. Pit, and ultimately of Mrs. Davenport.

Miss Younge had astonishing versatility as an actress. I know not whether, in strictness, her genius could be called of the first order ; — but she certainly was the most useful performer that any theatre could possess. In the higher tragedy she was dignified and lofty, but her countenance was not sufficiently expressive. In the kindling fervour of an enthusiastic spirit she had a mode of delivery peculiar to herself, and never failed to carry her audience along with her. She wore the male habit occasionally, and the really delicate and affectedly saucy forester, Rosalind, never had, in my judgment, a more winning representative.

In comedy, her women of fashion, though rather too solid and stately, were yet graceful and sportive. She did not affect a girlish activity : it was her mind that was buoyant, and it *seemed* to carry the frame lightly through the scene. If the character had a vein of sensibility in addition to the other captivations, she seized it with so much power, and her

voice became so perfect a vehicle for the passion of the moment, that it was impossible she should have a superior. I refer here more particularly to the fine flight of Miss Hardy in the masquerade scene of Mrs. Cowley's *Belle's Stratagem*, "Join him in the victorious war-dance on the borders of Lake Ontario," &c. The animation of some points, the subdued softness of others, and the swelling triumph of her close of the passage, furnished one of the most fascinating exhibitions upon the stage. Such was Miss Younge, and, to the last, such was Mrs. Pope. No! I will not ask, whether her Queen Katharine equalled that of Mrs. Siddons, or her Beatrice that of Mrs. Abington?—but I will record, as the greatest tribute to her talents, the exclamation of Mr. Harris the manager, on her death, that "the greatest loss he could ever sustain had just befallen him."

## CHAP. V.

MR. KEMBLE'S FIRST APPEARANCE IN LONDON.—HAMLET.—  
 PRE-EMINENCE OF THE CHARACTER. — CAST OF THE  
 PLAY.—ORIGINALITY OF HIS HAMLET.—COMPARED WITH  
 GARRICK AND HENDERSON.—MR. STEEVENS'S PETULANCE.  
 —MIS-STATEMENT OF A PASSAGE.—DR. JOHNSON WITH  
 MR. KEMBLE.—THE EXCLAMATION UPON MAN.—POINTS  
 IN MR. KEMBLE'S HAMLET CONTINUED.—HAMLET'S GHOST.  
 —WHY HE IS DREST IN ARMOUR.—PNEUMATOLOGY OF  
 SHAKSPEARE'S AGE.—GARRICK'S ALTERATION OF HAMLET.

It was on Tuesday the 30th of September, 1783, that Mr. Kemble made his first appearance at Drury Lane Theatre, in the character of Hamlet. The bills announced the play as originally written by Shakspeare; by which was to be understood no more, than that it was not the miserable alteration of the play, which had so discredited the taste and judgment of Garrick. There were, notwithstanding, *then*, (and they continue) many important omissions, which the length of what *is* given alone can sanction: some of the passages absolutely essential to the conduct of the story; all of them to the full developement of Hamlet's most interesting and singular character.

Hamlet has been more critically considered than

any other of Shakspeare's dramas, and the Prince of Denmark has, in his personal character, afforded a constant theme for moral investigation. But although he is decidedly the great favourite of our countrymen, much pains have been taken to show, that their affection is misplaced, and that Hamlet is vicious and immoral, and consequently unworthy of that sympathy, which has attended him from the time that Shakspeare exhibited him upon the stage to the present hour. Upon a hint from Dr. Akenside, Mr. Steevens has pronounced his conduct "every way unnatural and indefensible, unless he were to be regarded as a young man whose intellects were in some degree impaired." It may readily be conceived, that such an opinion would never pass without contradiction; and a more highly philosophical and charitable decision has resolved all his seeming guilt into the really amiable irresolution of his nature.

I mention this dispute, to show the great attention that had been excited to the character; that in an age of commentary every line had been critically considered; and that, though youth might choose the part from the aid it really lends to the actor, yet it required a very "learned spirit of human dealing," a sound judgment, and all the other requisites of the art, to obtain for the performer, in that day, any marked and distinguished admiration.

I remember speaking once with Mr. Kemble

upon the question agitated among the critics, whether Othello or Macbeth were our poet's greatest production. "The critics," said he, "may settle that point among them; they will decide only for *themselves*. As to the people, notice this, Mr. Boaden: take up any Shakspeare you will, from the first collection of his works to the last, which has been *read*, and look what play bears the most obvious signs of perusal. My life for it, they will be found in the volume which contains the play of Hamlet." I dare say, in my time, some hundred copies have been inspected by me; but this test has never failed in a single instance.

The actor, therefore, who, on the previous reputation of learning and diligence, excited notice and challenged criticism, had every possible difficulty to contend with: if he agreed with his predecessors and contemporaries, it would be said that he wanted originality; if he differed essentially, in either conception or execution, he was open to the charge of self-sufficiency and presumption. To extricate him in some degree from this dilemma, and to dispose the audience favourably towards him, there was some influence to be used, and it no doubt was employed with considerable success. Mrs. Siddons had, with becoming zeal, prepared her friends to welcome her elder brother; and as she had herself acted repeatedly with him, there could be no reasonable doubt of the opinion she expressed

of his talents. I am not sure that the inadequate exhibition of Othello by Stephen Kemble the week before at Covent Garden, did any harm to his brother. It was, to be sure, awkward to find a foil in his own family, but the incident seemed to turn itself into a joke against the manager of the rival theatre, who had engaged the *big*, instead of the *great* Kemble.

The cast of the play had nothing peculiar in it. Kemble took the performers of the other parts as he found them. Bensley was the Ghost — Farren the Horatio — Baddely the Polonius — Barrymore the Laertes. Packer had been so long the excellent or vicious monarch of the stage, that he was never deposed. By a very striking anticipation, Mrs. Hopkins performed his mother; and Miss Field was the representative of Ophelia. Parsons was the Grave-digger of the *bill* only; being indisposed, Suett, who had before “shovelled in dust” for him at York, attended him on this occasion. I notice this last circumstance to show the malignity of one of his critics in the papers; who, finding his Hamlet full of faults, yet gave to Parsons his most decided approbation. This gentleman thus proved his power of seeing, what was invisible to every perception but his own, or rather of writing from the play-bill, without visiting the theatre.

On Mr. Kemble’s first appearance before the spectators, the general exclamation was, “How very like his sister!” and there was a very striking

resemblance. His person seemed to be finely formed, and his manners princely ; but on his brow hung the weight of "some intolerable woe." Apart from the expression called up by the situation of Hamlet, there struck me to be in him a peculiar and personal fitness for tragedy. What others assumed, seemed to be inherent in Kemble. "Native, and to the manner born," he looked an abstraction, if I may so say, of the characteristics of tragedy.

The first great point of remark was, that his Hamlet was decidedly original. He had seen no great actor whom he could have copied. His style was formed by his own taste or judgment, or rather grew out of the peculiar properties of his person and his intellectual habits. He was of a solemn and deliberate temperament — his walk was always slow, and his expression of countenance contemplative — his utterance rather tardy for the most part, but always finely articulate, and in common parlance seemed to proceed rather from organization than voice.

It was soon found that the critic by profession had to examine the performance of a most *acute* critic. To the general conception of the character I remember but one objection ; that the deportment was *too scrupulously graceful* ; but, besides that Hamlet is represented by the poet as "the glass of fashion and the mould of form," I incline to think the critic's standard was too low, rather

than Kemble's too high ;—the manners were not too refined for such a person as Mr. Kemble's.

There were points in the dialogue in almost every scene which called upon the critic, where the young actor indulged his own sense of the meaning ; and these were to be referred to the text or context, in Shakspeare, and also to the previous manner of Garrick's delivery, or the existing one of Henderson's. The enemies of Kemble, that is, the injudicious friends of other actors, called these points NEW READINGS ; which became accordingly a term of reproach among the unthinking. The really judicious, without positively deciding, admitted the ingenuity and praised the diligence of the young artist. They freely confessed, that there might be endless varieties in the representation of such a character ; justifiable, too, by very plausible reasonings ; and congratulated themselves and the public upon a new and original actor, whose performances, at all events, would never disgust them by common place, but would at all times tend to make Shakspeare better known, by the necessity for his being more studied ; that the reference must be perpetual from the actor to the works ; and in thus contributing to the fame of the poet, the performer might eventually establish his own.

A pretty extensive list of such points is before me, noticed by myself and by others, where Mr. Kemble differed from Garrick or Henderson,



or both. I am therefore quite sure that I do not attribute to the beginning of his career, what I only noticed in the progress. The points too are curious in themselves, and merit to be here preserved; besides, that criticism unexemplified is as fruitless as metaphysics where the terms are not defined. We must have the passage literally before us, to know what we talk about. The first objection was to an emphasis. He was instructed to say, —

“ ’Tis an *un-weeded* garden, that grows to seed.”

But Mr. Kemble thought, and justly, that “un-weeded” was quite as intelligible with the usual and proper accent as the improper one; and besides, that the exquisite modulation of the poet’s verse should not be jolted out of its music, for the sake of giving a more pointed explanation of a word already sufficiently understood.

“ Sir, my good FRIEND ! I’ll change *that* name with you.”

Thus Mr. Kemble, upon Horatio’s saying to Hamlet that he was his poor *servant* ever. Dr. Johnson conceives it to mean, “ I’ll be your servant, you “ shall be my friend.” In which case the emphasis would rest thus —

“ Sir, my good FRIEND ! I’ll *change* that name with you.”

Perhaps, it may be rather, “ Change the term servant into that of friend. Consider us, without regard to rank, as friends.” Henderson evidently so understood it, for he said,

“ I’ll change *that* name with you.”

It was, I think, a novelty, when, after having recognized Horatio and Marcellus by name, Mr. Kemble turned courteously towards Bernardo, and applied the "Good even, sir," to him. The commentators were too busy in debating whether it should be evening or morning, to bestow a thought as to the *direction* of this gentle salutation.

It was observed how keenly Kemble inserted an insinuation of the King's intemperance, when he said to Horatio and the rest, —

"We'll teach you to DRINK *deep*, — ere you depart."

He restored, with the modern editors of Shakspeare, "*Dearest foe*," and "*Beteeme* the winds of Heaven;" and he was greatly censured for doing so, because, as the first term is unknown to the moderns in the sense of *most important*, or, as Johnson thought *direst*, and the word *beteeme* not known at all, the critic said, it might show *reading* so to speak them, but did not shew clear *meaning*; a thing of more moment to a popular assembly. This is a question, I am sensible, on which a great deal may be said; but let it be observed, that it involves the *integrity of a poet's text*. For the present, let it rest.

"My father, — methinks I see my father."

Professor Richardson terms this "the most solemn and striking apostrophe that ever poet invented." Mr. Kemble seemed so to consider it: — the image entirely possessed his imagination; and accordingly, after attempting to pronounce his panegyric —

“ He was a man, take him for all in all,”

a flood of tenderness came over him, and it was with tears he uttered, —

“ I shall not look upon his like again.”

I know the almost stoical firmness with which others declaim this passage ; and the political opposition affected, between the terms KING and MAN ; but I must be excused, if I prefer the melting softness of Kemble, as more germane to “ the weakness and the melancholy ” of Hamlet.

“ Did you not speak to it ? ” (*To Horatio.*)

Not only personally put to Horatio, for this must certainly be done, with emphasis or without, (as the others had said they did not speak to the spectre, and had invited Horatio, that he might do so,) but emphatically and tenderly, as inferring from the peculiar intimacy between them, that *he* surely had ventured to enquire the cause of so awful a visitation. Mr. Steevens, from a pique which Mr. Kemble explained to me, thought fit to annoy him upon this innovation ; and, without naming the object of his sarcasm, has left it in the margin of his Shakspeare.

“ Be it remembered, (says that editor,) that the words are not, as lately pronounced on the stage, ‘ Did not *you* speak to it ? ’ but ‘ Did you ‘ not *speak* to it ? ’ How awkward will the innovated sense appear, if attempted to be pro-

“ duced from the passage as it really stands in the  
 “ true copies !

‘ Did you not speak to it ?’

“ The emphasis, therefore, should most certainly  
 “ rest on *speak*.”

Here is, in the first place, a mis-statement. Mr. Kemble never did so speak ; but always placed the pronoun *you* before the negative ; and, as to the awkwardness, it may be more difficult to discover, than the critic was aware. Shakspeare, when putting a question very personally indeed, preserves this very arrangement. As thus to Banquo in Macbeth : —

“ Do you not hope your children shall be kings ?”

Mr. Kemble, however, told me, that he had submitted this to Dr. Johnson in one of those calls upon him which Boswell has mentioned, and that the doctor said to him, “ To be sure, sir, — *you* should  
 “ be strongly marked. I told Garrick so, long  
 “ since, but Davy never could see it.”

“ And for my soul, what *CAN* it do to *that*,  
 Being a thing immortal as itself ?”

Garrick here, with great quickness, said, “ What can it do to *THAT* ?” There is, I think, more impression in Kemble’s manner of putting it. In Garrick it was a truism asserted ; in Kemble not merely asserted, but *enjoyed*.

Having drawn his sword, to menace the friends

who prevented him from following the Ghost, every Hamlet before Mr. Kemble presented the point to the phantom as he followed him to the removed ground. Kemble, having drawn it on his friends, retained it in his right hand, but turned his left towards the spirit, and drooped the weapon after him — a change both tasteful and judicious. As a defence against such a being it was ridiculous to present the point. — To retain it unconsciously showed how completely he was absorbed by the dreadful mystery he was exploring.

The *kneeling* at the descent of the Ghost was censured as a *trick*. I suppose merely because it had not been done before: but it suitably marked the filial reverence of Hamlet, and the solemnity of the engagement he had contracted. Henderson saw it, and adopted it immediately, — I remember he was applauded for doing so.

These two great actors agreed in the seeming intention of particular disclosure to Horatio —

“ Yes, but there *is*, Horatio, — and much offence too.”

turned off upon the pressing forward of Marcellus to partake the communication. Kemble *only*, however, prepared the way for this, by the marked address to Horatio, “ Did you not speak to it?”

In the scene with Polonius, where Hamlet is asked what is the matter which he reads, and he answers, “ Slanders, sir,” Mr. Kemble, to give the stronger impression of his wildness, tore the leaf

out of the book. Even this was remarked, for he was of consequence enough, at first, to have every thing he did minutely examined.

A critic observed that, in the scene with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, he was not only familiar, but gay and smiling; and that he *should* be quite the reverse, because he tells them that he "has lost all his mirth," &c. This was pure misapprehension in the critic. The scene itself ever so slightly read would have set him right. Hamlet, from playing on Polonius, turns to receive gaily and with smiles his *excellent friends*, his *good lads*, who are neither the *button on fortune's cap*, nor the *soles of her shoe*. And it is only when the conception crosses him that they were sent to sound him, that he changes his manner, puts his questions eagerly and importunately, and, having an eye upon them, gives that account of his disposition, which rendered it but a sleeveless errand which they came upon.

Amid the dry cavils of criticism, let me indulge myself in saying, that such a piece of exquisite prose, as this very account, never was written even by Shakspeare himself. However lofty the conceptions, the expression is never turgid; and the reader may remark what care the Poet has taken to preserve it in a state of pure prose, for it never touches upon the measures of his verse. Let him compare the Moralists of Shaftesbury, for instance, and he will find there, wherever the writer strains

after the sublime, the language seems inclined to become blank verse if it could. The passage from Shakspeare I will here insert.

“ I have of late, (but wherefore I know not,) lost all my  
 “ mirth, forgone all custom of exercises : and, indeed, it goes  
 “ so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the  
 “ earth. seems to me a steril promontory ; this most excellent  
 “ canopy, the air, look you, this brave o’erhanging firmament,  
 “ this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why it appears  
 “ no other thing to me, than a foul and pestilent congregation  
 “ of vapours. What a piece of work is a man ! How noble in  
 “ reason ! How infinite in faculties ! in form, and moving, how  
 “ express and admirable ! in action, how like an angel ! in ap-  
 “ prehension, how like a God ! the beauty of the world ! the  
 “ paragon of animals ! and yet, to me, what is this quintessence  
 “ of dust ? Man delights not me.”

Bishop Warburton finely observes upon the above — “ This is an admirable description of a  
 “ rooted melancholy, sprung from thickness of  
 “ blood ; and artfully imagined to hide the true  
 “ cause of his disorder from the penetration of these  
 “ two friends, who were set over him as spies.”

After this digression, I proceed with the *points* in Mr. Kemble’s performance of Hamlet.

“ The *mobled* queen.”

Garrick repeated this after the player, as in doubt : Kemble, as in sympathy. And accordingly Polonius echoes his approbation ; and says, that the expression is good. “ *Mobled* queen is good.”

“Perchance to *dream* !”

Kemble prolonged the word *dream* meditatively. Just after, to Ophelia, he spoke the word *lisp* with one — lithp. A refinement below him.

Henderson and he concurred, in saying to Horatio,—

“Aye in my heart *of* heart, as I do thee.”

Garrick gave it differently: “heart *of heart*.” But I think would have attained his purpose better by changing his emphasis to “*heart* of heart,” as I remember somewhere, I think in Thomson,—

“And all the *life* of life is gone ;”

that is, I cherish thee in the divinest particle of the heart, which is to that organ itself what the heart is to the body. It emaciates these ideas much to try to unfold them — but some effort must be made, or we should talk vaguely.

In the mock play before the king, Garrick threw out, as an unmeaning rant, addressed to Lucianus,

“The croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.”

But I have not the slightest doubt, with Henderson and Kemble, that it is a reflection of Hamlet applicable to his own case, and quite on a par with that in Macbeth:—

“The raven himself is hoarse,

“That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan

“Under my battlements.”



Kemble gave the argument of the play in the finest manner possible —

“ They do but *jest* : POISON in jest,”

intone, and *observation* at the time, beyond all praise.

The reference to Rosencrantz, after Guildenstern, with the pipe, “ I do beseech you,” is an innovation. It involves both persons in the disgrace ; but if allowed at all, it can only be permitted as a felicity of *action* in the performance. At all events, the stately *march* from Guildenstern to Rosencrantz always seemed to me a *poor* thing ; and indeed chilling what was to follow : too formal, in a word, for the condition of Hamlet's mind.

In the chamber of the queen — “ Is it the king ?” was addressed to the million. Hamlet's nature is so little vindictive ! In this scene, it was doubted, whether, in “ speaking daggers” to the queen, they were *drawn* and *sharp* enough ? It struck me, that greater keenness would have been unfilial, and as if he took *delight* in the task, which only stern necessity imposed upon him.

Kemble *knelt* in the fine adjuration to his mother. An objection was taken, that the passage is *preceptive* rather than supplicatory : I think not.

“ Mother, for the love of grace !

“ Lay not this flattering unction to your soul.”

As an affectionate son, he is endeavouring to awake all the feelings of the mother in her, to combat the

delusion of her guilty attachment. The more endearing his urgency, the more strictly natural. Hamlet does not do justice to himself, when he adds,

“Forgive me this, my virtue !

“For, in the fatness of these pury times,

“Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg ;

“Yea curb and woo, for leave to do him good.”

He would fain persuade himself, that he is playing the politician ; while, in reality, he is only giving way to the pious tenderness of his feelings. Nor is this the only instance to be found of his amiable self-delusion.

“And when you are desirous to *be* blest,

“I'll blessing *beg* of you.”

Henderson again differed from Mr. Kemble's reading ; thus —

“And when you are desirous to be *blest*,

“I'll blessing beg of you.”

In the *grave* scene he never entirely satisfied himself: he was too studiously graceful ; and, under his difficulties, seemingly too much at his ease. The exclamation, on hearing that the dead body was Ophelia's, had not the pathos of Henderson's ; who seemed here struck to the very soul. The tone yet vibrates in my ear with which he uttered —

“What ! — the fair Ophelia !”

Years after, I reminded Mr. Kemble of this very fine

point, and he readily came into the manner of his predecessor.

The whole management of the strange fencing scene with Laertes was very graceful, and conciliatory ; and the operation of the poison, the tender address to Horatio, and the death, exhibited a most interesting close of this amiable, unfortunate, but matchless character.

We have for so many years been accustomed to see Hamlet dressed in the Vandyke costume, that it may be material to state, that Mr. Kemble played the part in a modern court dress of rich black velvet, with a star on the breast, the garter and pendant ribband of an order—mourning sword and buckles, with deep ruffles : the hair in powder ; which, in the scenes of feigned distraction, flowed dishevelled in front and over the shoulders.

As to the expression of the face, perhaps the powdered hair, from contrast, had a superior effect to the short curled wig at present worn. The eyes seemed to possess more brilliancy. With regard to costume, correctness in either case is out of the question, only that the Vandyke habit is preferable, as it removes a positive anachronism and inconsistency.

The ghost of Hamlet's father appears in *armour* ; a dress certainly suited to a warrior, but to one of other times. Now this was not at all incompatible with the dress called after Vandyke, in whose time armour was undoubtedly worn, as he has shown in

a great variety of portraits. But a completely *modern* suit upon young Hamlet, with his father in armour, throws the two characters into different and even remote periods, a confusion which it is absolutely necessary to avoid.

The reason for Shakspeare's dressing the ghost in armour has never been assigned, or nothing beyond the *picturesque* effect derived from it.\* Yet it has a very marked and striking propriety, when fully considered. The usual regal dress would have had nothing in it to alarm. The habit of interment would have been horrible, or loathsome, or ridiculous. Now his object seems to have been to excite the strongest attention, and yet not betray the real and ultimate cause of his appearance.

It will be remembered that Fortinbras of Norway had dared the late king to single combat ; and that he had forfeited along with life, all the "lands " which he stood seiz'd of" to the conqueror. Young Fortinbras, at the opening of this play, had, it seems, levied soldiers to recover the territories so lost by his father. The news had occasioned in Denmark much toilsome watch to the subject, and great martial preparations ; the casting of ordnance at home, and the making large purchases abroad of the implements of war. The people might entertain a reasonable fear, that what their late hero had acquired, would be lost by the less valiant spirit of his brother. The appearance of the late king is con-

\* See Mr. Steevens's note on the words *complete steel*.

ceived, therefore, to relate entirely to the approaching war — for he is observed to wear even the *very* armour he had on, when he combated the ambitious NORWAY.

“ Well may it sort, that this portentous figure  
“ Comes armed through our watch, so like the king,  
“ That was, and is, the question of these wars.”

The dress, we thus see, was calculated to point solely to the existing, or probable circumstances of the country; and kept, even from suspicion, the nature of the disclosure that was intended to Hamlet alone.

But whatever the sentinels might think of this appearance, no conception of foul play seems to have occurred to them; they referred every thing to the fearful events coming upon their countrymen. The spirit, however, resembled their late sovereign; it seemed to wish communication, but decidedly not to them; they therefore naturally think of making the affair known to his *son*, which leads to the interview between them, and the unfolding of that awful secret, which had never been anticipated.

Having, I trust, accounted satisfactorily for the dress of the spirit, a few observations may be allowed on the *properties* of the spirit itself. The pneumatology of Shakspeare's age is rather difficult — the writers who exhibit the popular notions, assign to spirits the power to invest themselves with form at pleasure. Form implies matter: dense or

rare, it must be substance to be at all an object of vision. When the purpose was answered, the assembled matter resolved itself into air, into thin air, and "what had seemed corporeal, melted as breath into the wind."

So far all was well ; be the notion philosophical or not, there is no inconsistency in it, nothing that involves a contradiction: THAT is seen, which had been suitably prepared to become the object of vision. But, as we advance in the play, a new and unexpected property presents itself, which demands a different theory — that of the spirit's being visible and invisible at the same moment. I allude to the return of the royal shade in the closet of the queen, where he is seen and heard by Hamlet, but not at all by his astonished mother, who looks in vain for the object of her son's alarm, and hears questions put, to which no answers seem to be returned.

What a fortunate thing it was for stage effect, that this property of his spectre did not earlier excite our notice. Upon this principle, the ghost might have suddenly refused to the centinels the power of seeing or hearing any more of him ; and, without drawing off his son to a more removed ground, have wrapt him *there*, before them, in a mysterious colloquy, intelligible only to themselves. Nor, let it be remarked, would this act have been more incongruous, than his invisible and inaudible presence in the queen's closet.

I have said that it was fortunate he did not do so — had he done it, we should have lost the desperation, which leads Hamlet to follow “the extravagant and erring spirit,” though it should conduct him to “the summit of the beetling sea-cliff,” or put on some “horrible shape” which might drive him into madness. We should have lost our own fearful expectation of the result, till they re-enter before us, and we perceive the prince sinking at last under his apprehensions, and in breathless terror exclaiming,

“Whither wilt thou lead me? speak: I'll go no further:”

we should have been encumbered, too, with persons useless to the scene, and unconscious of its business. But what would thus have been a blot in the management on the platform, is a beauty when it occurs in the closet — the queen is strongly discriminated by it from her son; she has terrors of a different kind from his; and is convinced, that his agitated mind has at length lost its sovereignty of reason, and thus peoples vacuity with bodiless creations.

Lest, however, any one should fancy that the appearance in the closet is a pure imagination of Hamlet's, though that on the platform was real; and, indeed, such a notion once banished the spirit of Banquo from the banquet — it will be sufficient to show, that this exclusive visibility was an acknowledged property of spirits. — Accordingly,

Prospero, after assigning to Ariel a particular shape, bids him to go thence and return in it, — adding these words : —

“ Be subject to no sight but THINE and MINE,  
“ Invisible to every eyeball else.”

I think I have heard of an attempt to deny the parallelism of Banquo's spirit with the shade of Denmark, because the latter *speaks*, in addition to the gestures they have in common. But surely speech may be fancied as well as appearance. In epilepsies, I am told, the patient is convincingly impressed with both.

It is curious to consider how learned men, engaged in the discoveries of science, sometimes become cold to the highest beauties of poetry. A great physician\* really seems to regret, that Shakspeare had not *known*, that all such fancied appearances result from the disordered state of the bodily organs. He would then, the doctor thinks, never have made his ghosts *visible* or *audible* on the stage. It being perfectly natural for men in the situation of Hamlet, Macbeth, and Brutus, to fancy such appearances, all would have proceeded in the actual course of nature ; and the terror now excited by an idle superstition would be replaced by a becoming sympathy with the effects of the disease. To be sure, my dear doctor, there

\* Dr. Alderson, on Apparitions.



cannot be the least doubt of it ; and long may you continue to prescribe this regimen — to the *French* theatre.

Perhaps the desire to unfold some of the many beauties, in the management of this tremendous being, may merit some indulgence ; but I cannot repent the effort ; for it is surely not irrelevant to my subject ; and the acting of Mr. Kemble always invited to the closest study of the excellencies of Shakspeare.

I had nearly omitted to mention, that in the wardrobe of a company contemporary with Shakspeare's, was " a robe for to go invisible."

Having incidentally mentioned Mr. Garrick's strange alteration of the play of Hamlet, it may not here be improper to add some account of it. In my youth I remember to have seen it acted, and for many years afterwards I could not get the smallest information, whether any copy was preserved of this unlucky compliment to Voltaire. A strange story was in circulation formerly, that it had been buried with the great actor : this, however, it was said, was not upon the humane principle, that a man's faults should die with him, but as a sort of consecration of so critical a labour.

But Mr. Kemble had in his library what I believe to have been the very copy of the play, upon which Mr. Garrick's alterations were made. He probably received it as a curiosity from Mrs. Garrick, who, I remember, presented to him the cane

with which Mr. Garrick walked abroad, and which as an accession to his vast collection of reliques of that great actor, Mr. Kemble properly bestowed upon Charles Matthews.

He cut out the voyage to England, and the execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, "who had made love to the employment, and marshalled his way to knavery." He omitted the funeral of Ophelia, and all the wisdom of the prince, and the rude jocularly of the grave-diggers. Hamlet bursts in upon the king and his court, and Laertes reproaches him with his father's and his sister's deaths. The exasperation of both is at its height, when the king interposes; he had commanded Hamlet to depart for England, and declares that he will no longer bear this rebellious conduct, but that his wrath shall at length fall heavy upon the prince. "First," exclaims Hamlet, "feel you mine;" and he instantly stabs him. The queen rushes out imploring the attendants to save her from her son. Laertes seeing treason and murder before him, attacks Hamlet to revenge his father, his sister, and his king. He wounds Hamlet mortally, and Horatio is on the point of making Laertes accompany him to the shades, when the prince commands him to desist, assuring him that it was the hand of Heaven, which administered by Laertes "that precious balm for all his wounds." We then learn that the miserable mother had dropt in a trance ere she could reach her chamber-

door, and Hamlet implores for her "an hour of penitence ere madness end her." He then joins the hands of Laertes and Horatio, and commands them to unite their virtues (as a coalition of ministers) to "calm the troubled land." The old couplet, as to the bodies, concludes the play.

All this is written in a mean and trashy commonplace manner, and, in a word, sullied the page of Shakspeare, and disgraced the taste and judgment of Mr. Garrick.

There are upon this copy of Hamlet evidences of some unpardonable liberties taken by another great actor, Mr. Betterton. The play itself was printed in 1703, and the passages omitted in the representation were denoted by inverted commas. After all the elaborate description of Betterton's address to the ghost, this is the way in which that address is exhibited as spoken on the stage : —

" Angels and ministers of grace defend us !

" What may this mean,

" That thou dead corse again in complete steel," &c.

All the solemn gradations by which Hamlet adjures the spirit, (so dear to an actor, who can discriminate,) were omitted. He employs no terrible or soothing terms — he treats him with neither ceremony nor affection, but after having commended himself to the care of angelic guards, at once asks the apparent shade of his father what he means by disturbing them? And it now oc-

curs to me, that what Cibber complained of, that some Hamlets absolutely *bullied the ghost*, could only have proceeded from this brutal omission of the very lines, that would have *taught* them how to approach so awful and mysterious a being.

“ Angels and ministers of grace defend us ! —

(*A considerable pause.*)

“ Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn'd , —

“ Bring with thee airs from heaven, or blasts from hell,

“ Be thy intents wicked, or charitable , —

“ Thou com'st in such a questionable shape,

“ That I will speak to thee ; I'll call thee, *Hamlet*,

“ King, father, royal *Dane* : O, answer me !

“ Let me not burst in ignorance ! but tell,

“ Why thy canoniz'd bones, hearsed in death,

“ Have burst their cerements ? why the sepulchre,

“ Wherein we saw thee quietly interr'd \*,

“ Hath op'd his ponderous and marble jaws,

“ To cast thee up again ? What may this mean ?” &c.

\* *Interr'd* with the quarto — not *inurn'd* with the folio ; a term unsuited to a body not reduced to *ashes*.

## CHAP. VI.

MR. KEMBLE'S RANGE OF PARTS AT THIS PERIOD VERY LIMITED. — THE BLACK PRINCE. — HIS SISTER, MISS E. KEMBLE. — MRS. SIDDONS AND HER AMAZING EXERTIONS. — HER ORIGINAL APPEARANCE IN 1775. — MR. SIDDONS. — THE PUBLISHED ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE GREAT ACTRESS. — JOHNSTONE IN IRISH CHARACTERS. — THE YATES'S. — WHIMSICAL LETTER OF YATES ON NEWSPAPER HINTS. — RETURN OF MRS. CRAWFORD. — COMPARED WITH MRS. SIDDONS. — MR. KEMBLE IN RICHARD III. — SIR GILES OVERREACH, — KING JOHN. — THE CRITICS. — MR. KEMBLE'S SCENE WITH HUBERT. — MRS. SIDDONS IN CONSTANCE. — HER MAJESTIC SORROWS. — BEVERLY. — THE OTHER THEATRE. — MASSINGER'S PICTURE. — MORE WAYS THAN ONE. — POOR SOLDIER. — STATE OF OUR THEATRES. — MRS. SIDDONS IN LADY RANDOLPH. — ITS BEAUTIES.

MR. Kemble repeated his Hamlet on the 2d, 4th, 6th, 13th, and 28th of October.

There was something remarkable in the management of that period, and which would have materially injured any actor but himself. I mean he was expected to keep his ground in tragedy, *alone*, against the amazing attraction of his sister, Mrs. Siddons. On the 8th of October she com-

menced her performances, that season, with the character of Isabella, by royal command. The regulations of the theatre did not allow Mr. Kemble to dispossess any actor of his accustomed parts. He was not permitted to strengthen either himself or his sister by acting with her. In Isabella the Biron was Smith, who retained also the Osmyn in the Mourning Bride. The Horatio and Lothario of the Fair Penitent were preoccupied, and Mr. Brereton and Mr. Bensley were the Jaffier and Pierre of Venice Preserved. In Jane Shore, Hastings and Dumont were equally and inalienably appropriated. And even on the 3d of November, when Isabella in Measure for Measure was performed by Mrs. Siddons, the Duke was acted by Mr. Smith, and nothing whatever was yielded to Mr. Kemble, on the ground either of his genius or the supposed influence of his sister.

He was therefore compelled to take his position upon some "removed ground," and got up Shirley's Edward the Black Prince, which had sunk under Garrick; and the wits of the time called the revival a miracle,—the resurrection of the dead. They allowed him the aid of one sister, Miss E. Kemble, a lady of a beautiful figure and very expressive face; but, like Miss F. Kemble (the late Mrs. Twiss), doomed to fade away, before the amazing brilliancy of Mrs. Siddons. They, however, sustained the poet's severest test, to which female beauty and talent could be subjected.

“ O blest with temper, whose unclouded ray,  
Can make to-morrow cheerful as to-day ;  
She who can love a sister's *charms*, and hear  
A sister's *praises* with unwounded ear.”

The Hamlet, notwithstanding, kept its ground, thus thwarted and opposed. It became so clear and undeniable a proof of rare and genuine talent, that Mr. Harris, the ablest of generals, started Henderson's as a rival attraction ; and the two greatest actors of their day were drawn into a competition, highly enjoyed by the town, and productive of much dispute, some research, and criticism sometimes vague, and sometimes partial and even blind.

It was a common thing to style the one all nature, and the other all art. To be sure, this was done with strict reciprocity ; for two epigrams, I remember, appeared on the same day, addressed to the two Hamlets ; — the writers agreeing in the attributes, only bestowing them upon different persons. I cannot be certain that the same muse did not, in this manner, pay court to each of the rivals.

On the first night Mr. Kemble had omitted the instructions to the Players, upon the modest principle, that he must first be admitted a master in the faculty, before he presumed to censure the faults of others.

“ Let such teach others, who themselves excel,  
And censure freely, who have ACTED well.”

He restored them afterwards, and gave the lesson very divertingly,—“Some of Nature’s *journeymen*,” with an arch smile; and becoming graver as he followed it by — “they imitated humanity so abominably.”

In the quarrel at the grave, with Laertes, he was at first thought rather too quiet; but he worked it up by degrees to a “towering passion,” and finally converted the Ossa of Mr. Barrymore into a mere wart, by throwing his millions of acres against the burning zone. Of rants, mere intended rants, this is one of the best going, and an especial favourite with the *gods* of the theatre.

“LAUD we the gods!

And let our crooked smokes climb to their nostrils.”

CYMB.

Woe, at all events, to the refinement that would wish to “govern their roaring throats.” They may sometimes burst in thunder upon a moment of exquisite and tender feeling; and it is then hard to preserve a philosophic temperament. But nothing can to the actor compensate the *cheer* of their honest unrestrained applause.

I am now more immediately to notice the progress of Mrs. Siddons herself. From the 10th of October, 1782, to the 5th of June, 1783, is a period of 239 days. If we take away the Sundays and those of *lenten* entertainment, there will remain not quite 190 nights of dramatic performance. The amazing strength, as well as ardour, of this



great actress, carried her through eighty nights of characters exceedingly trying to her feelings and her constitution. She had repeated,

Isabella . . . . .	22	times.
Grecian Daughter . . . . .	11	ditto.
Jane Shore . . . . .	14	ditto.
Calista . . . . .	14	ditto.
Belvidera . . . . .	13	ditto.
Zara . . . . .	3	ditto.
Fatal Interview (by Hull) . . . . .	3	ditto.

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80 times.

Her salary at this theatre was at first put greatly below her value ; but she looked to a benefit for the larger supply. It was a night free from all charges, and her receipts were said to amount to upwards of £800. The size of the theatre then may be conceived, when I state that it had never before held more than £300, and numerically reckoning the audience at common prices, there was on that night £330. It was the 14th December, 1782 ; the play was *Venice Preserved*, and she acted *Belvidera*.

Nor was this all, for on the 18th March following she had a second benefit, when she performed the character of *Zara* in the *Mourning Bride*. Very considerable presents were made to her, accompanied by suitable expressions of admiration from persons of rank and talent. Buckingham House had not been wanting in those distinctions which Majesty can confer, for Mrs. Siddons was

appointed reading preceptress to the young princesses, by her Majesty's express command.

However, it became apparent that her health could not sustain any long continuance of such prodigious efforts as she had made during her first season. She frequently fainted away at the close of her performances, and it was long before she was sufficiently recovered to be supported into her dressing-room. Nor were her effects upon her audiences less distressing. In her latter period, she called upon majesty and energy to supply the place of that exquisite tenderness, with which in her earlier days she had subdued every thing that wore the human form. Upon some comparative babble having reached her in her retirement, she one day said, "To hear these people talk, one would think that I had never excited a tear." Alas! excuse the unthinking idlers, dear and incomparable woman! If in *Lady Macbeth* the terror you excited was unequalled, — the agony produced by your *Isabella*, your *Belvidera*, your *Shore*, your *Mrs. Beverley*, as little admitted any rational comparison.

What an astonishing change had taken place in the course of seven years, as to her powers themselves, or the public sense of them, or both! It was on the 29th November, 1775, that she made her first appearance at Drury Lane Theatre in *Portia* in the *Merchant of Venice*. It was once only repeated. She acted the *Lady Anne* in

Richard III. to Mr. Garrick's Richard, and under the terror with which he impressed her, hung back a little when they advanced together from the back of the stage. She has been heard to say, that the glance of reproach that he threw at her, was distressing long after to her recollection. He had clearly never seen the genius concealed under her timidity ; and her other characters under his management were mere compliments to her personal loveliness. She acted in Colman's revival of *Epicæne* ; the Black-moor\* washed White, which was damned ; Love's *Metamorphoses*, acted for the benefit of Mrs. Wrighten and Mr. Vernon ; Emily in Mrs. Cowley's *Runaway*, a character rising early and walking in a garden to be courted in a most trifling and apropos way. But this was not the climax of her walking talent ; she walked as Venus in the procession of the Jubilee, and, at the end of the season, had the usual courteous permission to walk any where else ; or, in plainer language, was discharged.

I remember that Mr. Siddons once told me, that I must not be astonished to hear, that he himself had been of rather greater value in the country than his wife, from his versatility as an actor. The domestic claims upon her exertions seem to have awakened a genius but little suspected, and stimulated that industry, without which in this difficult art even genius will attain but little.

Upon the unprecedented success of her benefit, Mrs. Siddons made her public acknowledgments for the patronage she had received. It will at all events prove the modest deference with which *then* the greatest merit thought it becoming to address the public; and shall be preserved, as a formulary for talents inferior to her's.

“ M<sup>rs</sup>. Siddons would not have remained so long  
“ without expressing the high sense she had of  
“ the great honours done her at her late benefit,  
“ but that, after repeated trials, she could not  
“ find words adequate to her feelings; and she  
“ must at present be content with the plain lan-  
“ guage of a grateful mind,—that her heart thanks  
“ all her benefactors, for the distinguished, and,  
“ she fears too partial encouragement, which they  
“ bestowed on this occasion. She is told, that  
“ the splendid appearance on that night, and the  
“ emoluments arising from it, exceed any thing  
“ ever recorded on a similar account in the annals  
“ of the English stage; but she has not the vanity  
“ to imagine, that this arose from any superiority  
“ over many of her predecessors, or some of her  
“ contemporaries. She attributes it wholly to that  
“ liberality of sentiment, which distinguishes the  
“ inhabitants of this great metropolis from those  
“ of any other in the world. They know her  
“ story: they know, that for many years, by a  
“ strange fatality, she was confined to move in  
“ a narrow sphere, in which the rewards attendant

“ on her labours were proportionally small. With  
“ a generosity unexampled, they proposed at once  
“ to balance the account, and pay off the arrears  
“ due, according to the rate, the too partial rate,  
“ at which they valued her talents. She knows  
“ the danger arising from extraordinary and  
“ unmerited favours, and will carefully guard  
“ against any approach of pride, too often their  
“ attendant. Happy shall she esteem herself, if,  
“ by the utmost assiduity, and constant exertion  
“ of her poor abilities, she shall be able to lessen,  
“ though hopeless ever to discharge, the vast debt  
“ she owes the publick.

“ *Drury Lane Theatre,*

“ *Dec. 17. 1782.*”

On the 2d October, 1783, Mr. Johnstone, who had been acting in Dublin at the same time as Mr. Kemble, and whose talent had likewise brought him to London, made his first appearance at Covent Garden Theatre, in *Lionel*, in the opera of *Lionel and Clarissa*. His voice was a clear melodious tenor, with a very sweet, though somewhat disproportionate, falsetto; and he sang in a plain and pleasing style, without the slightest affectation or mixture of the foreign graces in music. It was observed, that he spoke quite as well as he sang. His person was genteel, his features expressive, and his manners graceful and easy. Some time after this he assumed those diverting characters, which

had been written for Moody of the other theatre ; and performed them in a manner more truly characteristic of their countrymen.

The blunders of the Irish Gentleman proceed from the hilarity of his nature and the hurry of his animal spirits. Moody was the most deliberate, not to say torpid of actors. The confusion of ideas in him, therefore, seemed to have no adequate cause. In Johnstone the cause and consequence were equally and thoroughly apparent. He had a laughing brightness, too, that played about his countenance, and won you before he spoke ; and, like Mr. Lewis, his very appearance exhilarated the spectator. Some years after, when I became a frequenter of the green-room, as a dramatic writer, I used to observe a peculiarity in this delightful actor, when he came off the stage, that throws some light upon the obscure subject, how an actor feels the character he represents. I mean, not as identical, (supposing himself the character,) but sympathetic, as the audience themselves feel it. On the stage, Mr. Johnstone discovered no enjoyment of the risible blunders that he had been uttering ; but the moment he came off at the wing, he used to relieve himself by a scream of laughter, that was the seeming *fine* for the restraint he had put upon his nature.

I have exhibited the decided prevalence of tragedy during the present period, and noticed the

policy of the Covent Garden manager, and the stand he made by the aid of Henderson and Miss Younge, against the attraction of Kemble and Mrs. Siddons. He further strengthened himself, by engaging Mrs. Crawford, whose health had required that she should visit the continent, and she speedily appeared at that theatre.

There was another lady of very great talent, who about this time seemed to have some inclination to return to the boards. On Friday the 17th October, a paragraph appeared in the Public Advertiser, which, in the familiar style of that day, stated that "Dick Yates and his wife had retired from the stage with a fortune perhaps much larger than any of their predecessors, except Garrick. At the least it may be computed at 36,000*l.*, or 40,000*l.* Yates and his wife are also remarkable for the comely appearance with which they bear their age; for the age of these old acquaintance of the public is much greater than is usually thought. From theatrical dates, the one must be 70, the other 60 years old."

Perhaps this might be deemed one of those instances of Mr. Puff's skill in writing people *up*, out of the way. Positive retirement, a handsome fortune, and age that seemed to forbid all further exertion! It threw the comedian into ungovernable fury; and he vented his displeasure against the writer in a letter to the printer of the Public

Advertiser, dated the day following : it is by no means ill written, and is very characteristic and entertaining ; I therefore preserve it here entire.

“ Saturday, 18th October, 1783,

“ SIR,

“ THOUGH it is not my profession to write, but to retail the writings of others, yet I find the spirit move me to hazard some observations on a very good-humoured, sprightly, elegant paragraph in your paper of yesterday.

“ The facetious gentleman is pleased to say, that Yates and his wife have retired from the stage with 36,000*l.* or 40,000*l.*, and that they are remarkable for their comely appearance, though one is, from theatrical dates, 70, the other above 60 years of age. 'Tis wonderful so wise a man should be mistaken, but the facts are,

“ They have not retired with 40,000*l.*

“ They have not retired at all.

“ Theatrical dates do not prove them to be, the one 70, the other more than 60 years of age.

“ In respect to myself, that I am remarkable for my comely appearance ; that I can (though not worth quite 40,000*l.*) eat my mutton without an engagement, and yet owe no man any thing, are offences to which I am ready to plead guilty : if comeliness is a sin, Heaven help me, I say ! and as to owing no man any thing, in these days when it is the genteelest thing in the world to pay no



man any thing, I must e'en stand trial before a jury of honest tradesmen, who, I dare say, will acquit me, from the singularity of the case.

"In respect to theatrical dates, I have, to be sure, told the chimes at midnight some five-and-thirty years ago, which, as I find myself just as healthy and alert as in those delightful days, I do not think at all disqualifies me for my general cast of characters, in which I have pleased as good judges as your correspondent; nor is it absolutely necessary that the Miser, Fondlewife, Gomez, Don Manuel, Sir Wilful Witwou'd, &c. should have the first down of a beard on their chins: but I will whisper something in the gentleman's ear, that whilst such writers as he are allowed to assassinate honest people in the dark, by abusive anonymous paragraphs, nobody that has mutton to eat will look out for theatrical engagements, but quietly let the stage fall into that happy state

' When one Egyptian darkness covers all.'

So much for myself; and now for Mrs. Yates.

"That she is a pretty enough actress, as times go, and by no means uncomely, I willingly allow; but that she is more than 60, or will be these dozen years at least, may bear something of a doubt. As her first appearance was on Drury Lane stage, and in the full meridian of its glory, the date is easily ascertained; but to save the gentleman trouble, as he seems a bad calculator, I will inform

him it was in Mr. Crisp's Virginia, in the year 1754, (29 years ago,) and that she was then as pretty a plump, rosy Hebe, as one shall see in a summer's day.

"She had the honor (an honor never conferred on any other person) of being introduced, as a young beginner, by a prologue written and spoken by that great master, Mr. Garrick, in which the following lines are to the present purpose : —

" ' If novelties can please, to night we've two, —  
 ' Tho' English both, yet spare 'em as they're new. —  
 ' To one at least your usual favor show ; —  
 ' A female asks it, can a man say no ?  
 ' Should you indulge our novice yet unseen,  
 ' And crown her with your hands a tragic queen :  
 ' Should you with smiles a confidence impart,  
 ' To calm those fears which speak a feeling heart ;  
 ' Assist each struggle of ingenuous shame,  
 ' Which curbs a genius in its road to fame ;  
 ' With one wish more her whole ambition ends —  
 ' She hopes some merit to deserve such friends.'

"And now give me leave, sir, to tell your correspondent a story.— On the first coming to England of Signor Trebbi, a worthy gentleman, the editor of a newspaper, paid him a morning visit, and informed him he was a public writer, and had characters of all prices. " I understand you, Sir," said Trebbi, " and have heard of you : I have no guineas to throw away so ill ; but I am a writer too ; *et voila ma plume !*"—" This is my pen," showing him a good English oaken towel. Signor

Trebbi was so good as to leave me his pen, the only one I shall make use of against malevolence in future, where the writer does me the honor of making himself known to me.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your most obedient humble servant,

“ RICHARD YATES.”

It may be amusing to notice, in passing, the vast exaggeration of self-love. Mrs. Yates was a most graceful and beautiful woman, and her musical declamation yet rings delightfully in my ear. Her *Andromache* was one of the most classical things in the world. Yates himself was the blunt, rude son of nature, upon whom no refinement seemingly could ever be engrafted; but admirable in his quality. But he really thinks, from their retirement, that the stage was about to fall into a state of Egyptian darkness and hopeless degeneracy. It would injure his memory to record the names of those, who at that time enlightened it.

Everything at Covent Garden bore the semblance of great vigour. The attendance at rehearsals was now enforced by fines extending through all ranks of the *dramatis personæ*. Half-a-crown was levied if the performer did not arrive during the first act; — half-a-guinea if the whole of the play had been unattended. And on the 13th of November Mrs. Crawford actually returned, after an absence of

five years. She chose for her first appearance Lady Randolph in Douglas, a character which her great rival had not acted in London.

She looked still a fine woman, though time, while it had taken something from the elegance of her figure, had also begun to leave its impression upon her features. It soon appeared the great actresses were of very different schools; that what was unimpassioned in the dialogue was somewhat rapidly given by Mrs. Crawford, who evidently reserved herself for striking effects. While Mrs. Siddons seemed to consider that every thing in the part she played required the utmost care; and that where declamation was not to be lifted by passion, it was to charm by a kind of tender and melancholy music, disposing the soul to the superior effects when they arose. Although no comparison could be made except as to the general style of the two artists, it was yet not very difficult to anticipate in what points they would be found to differ in the performance of the character in question.

The voice of Mrs. Crawford was somewhat harsh, and what might be termed broken. In level speaking it resembled the tone of passion in other speakers. It was at no time agreeable to the ear; but when thrown out by the vehemence of her feeling, it had a transpiercing effect, that seemed absolutely to wither up the hearer: — it was a flaming arrow; — it was the lightning of

passion. Such was the effect of her almost shriek to old Norval,

“Was he alive?”

It would be ungenerous to ask, whether even a mother, hanging with breathless terror over every word of the old shepherd's narrative, could summon force enough for such an explosion? The fact was, that reason here had nothing to do. It was an electric shock, that drove the blood back from the surface suddenly to the heart, and made you cold and shuddering with terror in the midst of a crowded theatre.

Henderson acted old Norval for the first time. There is nothing but simple affection in the character, but in the only fine scene in the play, the discovery to the mother, Henderson acted fully up to Mrs. Crawford, and the sympathy of the audience vibrated equally between them. Lewis, always gallant and graceful, if he was not eloquent, gained on that night credit even by his tragedy.

The fame of Mrs. Crawford five years before at that theatre, brought to the house a number of fashionable and intelligent admirers of the art; and the applause was commensurate with the exertion upon the stage. The public beheld a great accession to their stock of rational delight; and the manager found that he had at last something, which would bear a positive opposition to the great tragedian of the other house. There

were many, who, running a kind of parallel, such as Dr. Johnson wrote between Dryden and Pope, came to a somewhat similar result. "If the flights of Crawford," said they, "are higher, Siddons continues longer on the wing. If of Crawford's fire the blaze is brighter, of Siddons's the heat is more regular and constant. The one often surpasses expectation, and the other never falls below it. Crawford is heard with frequent astonishment, and Siddons with perpetual delight." But I confess, leaving the parallel as I find it, I never could perceive, with some, that Mrs. Siddons had less genius, because she had more art. She only seemed to me to have a more masterly controul over every part of her subject. It must not be forgotten too that Mrs. Siddons was in the prime of life, not thirty; that in addition to powerful feelings and harmonious speech, she had a person of great dignity, and a face of astonishing expression; that her very action was a language, and her attitudes models for the statuary and the painter.

Mr. Kemble, on the 6th of November, appeared in the character of King Richard III. It had then, by no means the effect, which he subsequently gave to it; and I reserve myself, as to this character, for a later period of his life, when there will be a necessity to compare him with two competitors in the part. The dreadful energy of Garrick was fully in the recollection of many of his audience, and of all the critical part. What they

found in Kemble was greater *subtlety* than had usually been displayed ; with another feature, which had rarely been supposed an ingredient in Richard's character at all.

A too apparent CUNNING, broadly marked out to the spectator, Kemble always thought improper, and *vulgar* in acting. He rightly conceived that the daring "Son of York," who deceived so many, and moulded all to his purposes, must have been refined in his manners, and, indeed, every thing to all men. His *address*, therefore, was by Kemble studiously fashioned and nicely varied. What he seemed to want most, was that concentrated force of body and of voice, that could carry him through near four hours of a character, never five minutes off the stage ; and of which the demand for the greatest power arises precisely at the time when the actor from previous exertion must be exhausted.

On the 14th of the same month, he carried, as Massinger had done, Richard the Third into Comedy, and acted Sir Giles Overreach in the New Way to Pay Old Debts. With all my admiration of Kemble, I never thought his Sir Giles to be named with Henderson's. He had not the bustle, the ardour, the grasp of the man ; and his exultation was not so triumphant as Henderson's. The fancy of the latter seemed to make an empress of his daughter, and bid the whole world worship the idol, that he had framed and set up. He was

greater too, I thought, in the scene with the parchment deeds, which he finds blank; the ink that conveyed the lands having been extracted. The manager on this night lent him the *support* of an air balloon, which was introduced into the pantomime to amuse the croud. He repeated his Hamlet on the following evening. It had become a permanent possession for the theatre.

He had also to prepare himself in King John, their Majesties being desirous of seeing the brother and sister together. Old Mr. Sheridan came to his lodgings, with great kindness, and read the character over to him; I suppose very nearly as he used to play it. I never thought much of this mode of assistance; and am apt to consider the conceptions only *exactly* suited to the person who forms them: that you never thoroughly succeed, in making one man act by the judgment of another. I looked surprised, I believe, when he told me the fact. But I asked him how Sheridan read the character? and he answered, "Very finely."

In King John, the critics said he was too artificial, and too cold. In the great scene with Hubert, they found him too solemn and monotonous. But enough of this *too* much regarded nonsense. The most cold-blooded, hesitating, cowardly and creeping villainy, that ever abused the gift of speech, found in Mr. Kemble the only powers competent to give it utterance. And if I were to select a scene, in the whole compass of the



drama, more appropriated to him than any other, I should, I think, fix upon this noiseless horror, this muttered suggestion of slaughterous thought, on which the midnight bell alone was fitted to break, by one solitary undulating sound, that added to the gloom.

The scene where he was parched up by the poison was equally skilful. As to the Constance of Mrs. Siddons, the taunts to Austria were the especial favourites. But I am clearly of opinion, that among the finest things she ever did, are to be numbered, the majestic sorrows — the look — the mode of taking the earth as a throne — the pride of soul, with which she prepared, deserted and devoted as she found herself, to shame the assembled sovereigns, who had so basely abandoned her cause. The lines of Shakspeare, it is true, suggest it all ; but never did the grand conceptions of a poet find more congenial imagination, never perhaps *equal* powers to embody the creation of his fancy. The lines cannot be omitted, which she spoke.

“ *Sal.* Pardon me, Madam,  
I may not go without you to the kings.  
*Const.* Thou may’st, thou shalt, I will not go with thee.  
I will instruct my sorrows to be proud ;  
For grief is proud, and makes his owner stout.  
To me, and to the state of my great grief,  
Let kings assemble ; for my grief’s so great,  
That no supporter but the huge firm earth  
Can hold it up ; here I and sorrow sit ;  
Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it.”

The lamentation for her "pretty Arthur" was, as might be imagined, one of the most affecting things in the world. It might have been supposed, that no being but a mother could have written this exquisitely tender passage. Mr. Malone has conjectured, that the exclamations of Constance were the "*veræ voces pectore ab imo*" of the poet himself, who at the writing of this play had to lament the loss of his only son. It might be so; but he never seemed to find the slightest difficulty in drawing from his fancy alone the genuine expression of any passion incident to our nature.

In order to keep the really great efforts in succession, I have passed over the Gamester, which was performed on the 22nd of November — the husband and wife by himself and his sister. As there is in the character of Beverley little discrimination, it could only claim the notice of Mr. Kemble from its *pathos*. It is a human being under the influence of a strong infatuation, which leads him ultimately to his ruin. The gamester is a selfish and a childish wretch, who considers only his own gratification, and is the dupe of the most shallow imposition. He really has no affections; he would be cured, if he had them. There is a moral error in the very endeavour to render such a being amiable. Amiable! the scoundrel who throws at hazard for unneeded splendor, against the absolute misery of a whole family! But let us not waste a word to demonstrate, what is self-evident. In the

closing scenes, Mr. Kemble was deeply affecting ; and if the wretched victims of that passion ever could be reclaimed, such an exhibition might be of the utmost moment — but the play may deter, though it cannot reclaim. The domestic distress, the wakeful, watching agonies, the unbounded affection of the wife, as exhibited by Mrs. Siddons, dissolved the audience into tears — but powerful as the interest is, the play is but a *tragedie bourgeoise*. It is lifted neither by time, the action not being remote ; — nor by elevated character — nor by the third grand resort of the poet, the language. It is therefore but every day distress, in common dialogue, and, however affecting, below the dignity of the tragic muse. These two great tragedians repeated the play seven times in the course of the season.

At Covent Garden Theatre an alteration of Massinger's Picture claims to be noticed. With great absurdity the play begins to be called the *Magic Picture* precisely when the picture ceased to be magical. What necessity there can be for thus lowering the splendid fictions of a former age to the narrow credibility of modern times, I could never see. Nobody wants the audience to believe an incident more than *dramatically* probable or possible ; and this may always be secured by suitable preparation. The imagination is of all things soonest won to its principal gratification, — the strange, the wonderful.

By the present alteration, the picture became a common portrait—the husband only a jealous man, who “fancied things that were not;” and thus, purified too in its grosser scenes, Massinger supplied a second drama to the modern stage. There were some slight songs and a chorus added, and it for a few nights answered the purposes of the theatre.

Mrs. Crawford repeated her *Lady Randolph* several times — gave her *Euphrasia*, in the *Grecian Daughter*, on the 27th of November, with very great applause; and, on the 11th of December, opposed her great rival also in *Belvidera*.

On the 6th of December, Mrs. Cowley's comedy called *More Ways than One*, was acted for the first time at Covent Garden Theatre. It had a good deal of bustle and intricacy, though the ground-work of the structure was extremely simple. Dr. Fee-love, a physician, has a niece, with whom the hero of the comedy determines to be in love. He introduces himself to their acquaintance, as a patient in the last stage of an atrophy. The doctor pronounces his case a hopeless one, but the lover does not despair — indeed he has no great difficulty in prevailing upon the lady to return his affection with mutual ardour, and she agrees to elope with the patient, to avoid a match with a subject less agreeable. They contrive to send the doctor to Hampstead, the while, upon a feeless visit; and having staked his whole credit as a physician, that the

patient could not be restored to health, he consents to their union, to preserve his skill from open impeachment. There is a second plot equally slight, which produces a second union. The comic force of the piece was the physician acted by Quick, and Sir Marvel Mushroom, a character for Edwin; the latter is a person anxious to display his knowledge in history, but for ever confusing and misapplying names, characters, dates, and events. It is probable Mrs. Cowley had seen something like this in some retired tradesman, who having indisputably a large fortune, was ambitious of a fame which he could afford to be without.

The liveliness of Mrs. Cowley could contrive to work very entertaining matter out of materials such as these. Her dialogue is gay though not witty. But she was loudly applauded for a sentiment, which I hope, and think I know, to be groundless: "That the purer virtue is in a female, the nearer it is to its destruction." The purest virtue is that which has been tried and triumphs over seduction. Confidence may be destroyed, because it is too proud or ignorant to estimate the danger. Purity of virtue is not to be inferred from the mere absence of all suspicion. This is artless innocence, the usual prey of the vicious. The purest virtue

" Is woman's firm obedience fully tried  
Through all temptation, and the tempter foil'd  
In all his wiles, defeated and repuls'd."

At a future opportunity, in the course of this

work, I shall state my personal observation of this lady's fine qualities, and allude to the friendship with which she honoured me, her conversation and peculiarly pleasing manners. Dr. Johnson has said, that the mind is led to some particular pursuit by circumstances forgotten or remembered. In Mrs. Cowley, what led her to poetry was remembered, and is sufficiently obvious — her grandmother was the first cousin of Gay. Her father, Mr. Parkhurst, was himself an excellent classical scholar. Every thing about her was conducive to her progress in literature. Her *Run-away* was accepted by Mr. Garrick in 1776, and her most diverting farce of "*Who's the Dupe?*" was received by Sheridan in 1779. Her *Belle's Stratagem*, the best of her comedies, was produced at Covent Garden in the year 1780, and is likely ever to be there.

This season Mr. O'Keefe re-produced his *Sham-rock*, with many additions, and some omissions, under the title of *The Poor Soldier*: the success of this afterpiece was unbounded; it has been the nearly constant attraction in every English theatre from that time to this, and while the comic talent of our stage supplies a Darby, it can never fail. The original performer of this character was Edwin, and his effect in it cannot be described. Every reader knows the incident of his discovering the wound upon Patrick the soldier's forehead; but the look, with which he resigned his pretensions

to becoming a hero, baffles all description. Mrs. Kennedy, though a bad figure, acted Patrick on account of the singular quality of her voice, a beautiful tenor; the song "How happy the soldier," became a surprising favourite with the town; it saluted you in all companies, it walked through every street, before you or behind you; blated out from the hand-organ, and buzzed away from the wheel of the hurdygurdy. Johnstone also, with a sweetness never surpassed, established the fame of two beautiful ballads, "Sleep on, sleep on," and the "Brown Jug." Shield, then the first of melodists, gave the music.

Mr. O'Keefe is still living I hear, but blind, and I fear, very far from comfortable in his circumstances: by the better arrangements of the French drama, an author so popular would have a fortune to receive, and to bequeath at his decease.

The state of our great theatres, is a curious problem. The rewards to authors are inconsiderable, the proprietors are in perpetual difficulties, the scale of expence is enormous, and as to the theatres themselves, either from want of art in the construction, or an erroneous notion of the *proper* attraction, the work is never done. We have hardly read the praise of the architect, when it is found that he knew nothing of the *principle*, or failed in its application if he did. Theatres become vast from speculation, miscalculating both means and ends: they are made glittering and

gaudy, because our spectators love to be an exhibition themselves. The genuine drama is banished; because to give its former pleasure, every word must be distinctly heard, every gesture accurately perceived. Music triumphantly reigns over the subject reason of the country, and her handmaid, procession, fills her court with endless and glaring frippery. While I am writing this paragraph, a singer is absolutely deliberating, whether he shall accept the sum of two thousand five hundred pounds for five weeks performance.

But to return to the regular course of this narrative.

Mrs. Siddons did not at all avoid the closest comparison with her great rival. Accordingly, on the 22d December, for her own benefit, she appeared for the first time in the character of Lady Randolph. I cannot say that she never saw Mrs. Crawford act the part: she however played it, to all appearance, purely from her own conception. I remember the curiosity I felt to see her, and I still feel how amply that curiosity was repaid. As a preliminary remark, the reader will allow me to say, that this great actress always impressed you powerfully with the scope of the character she performed, the moment you first beheld her. Her deportment conveyed the mind and circumstances of the being she represented. In Lady Randolph she wore the traces of sorrows that admitted of no cure. In a viduary state, she had accepted the



protection of a second husband. Her affections had been buried in the grave of the first.

I was struck with the profound melancholy of her speech to Anna.

“ Didst thou not ask, what had my sorrows been  
If I in early youth, had lost a husband ?  
In the cold bosom of the earth is lodg’d,  
Mangl’d with wounds, the husband of my youth ;  
And in some cavern of the ocean lies  
My child and his.”

There was a very fine moral impression in the insisting upon *sincerity*, a little farther on, as the first of virtues.

In the second act nothing ever surpassed, in grace and benignity, her attention to young Norval’s narrative. The comment she makes, upon the change of his fortune, and the opening horizon of his prospects, was closed sublimely by the two lines,

“ On this my mind reflected while you spake,  
And bless’d the wonder working hand of Heaven.”

And the comparison of herself with the supposed happy mother of Norval,

“ Whilst I — to a dead husband bore a son,  
And to the roaring waters gave my child.”

In the following scene with Glenalvon, the amazing intelligence of her look, and the action of her right arm, when she uttered

“ I have not *found* so : thou art KNOWN to me,”

were a volume of communication to a base and mastered spirit.

The third act introduced old Norval; and the utmost anxiety was felt around me, as to the mode in which she would deliver the famous

“ Was he alive ? ”

Shakspeare shall say how. As one, then,—

“ Who almost dead for breath, had scarcely more  
Than would make up the question.”

Her admirers seemed to regret, that she had lost the great burst: but she had only changed its place; and pierced every bosom with the tones in which she exclaimed,

“ Inhuman that thou art !  
How could'st THOU kill, what waves and tempests spar'd ? ”

The triumphant burst at last,

“ 'Tis he ! 'tis he himself ! it is my son ! ”

only her own organ could convey.

The fourth act had its full share of these beautiful and finished efforts. For instance, when shewing the jewels, which Norval recognizes to have been his father's. The mournful iteration of the word, and the pathos that succeeded it, were modulated with the truest ear, or rather the keenest feeling in the world.

“ Thy *father's*, say'st thou ? — ah ! they WERE thy father's.”

Her admiration of the personal beauty of Douglas,

“ Yet in my prime, I equal’d not thy father ;”

had a singular attraction, coming from a woman so grand and yet so lovely. Mrs. Siddons once directed my attention to the somewhat similar description of Bertram’s beauty, by Helena, in “ All’s well that ends well.”

In the fifth act, of highest value were the *tender cautions*, to repress the youthful, headlong valour of her son.

“ Lord Randolph, hear me ! all shall be thine own ;  
But spare ! oh spare my son !”

gave almost insupportable agony to the audience — this, followed by the exulting transport, “ He lives ! he lives !” were *her* triumph and nature’s.

But the gloomy absorption that followed his death —

“ Of thee, I think not ; what have I to do  
With thee, or any thing ? — my son ! my son !  
My BEAUTIFUL ! my brave !”

It is worthy of record that the word *beautiful*, from Mrs. Siddons, had all the fascination it describes. She had the feeling of an artist, it seemed, combined with that of a mother.

The concluding line of the character, as Mrs. Siddons gave it, was —

“ For such a son,  
And such a husband, *drive me to my fate.*”

Mr. Steevens ridiculed it successfully; but the actress, who prefers Home's "make a woman bold," will find her exit somewhat weakened by it. I have thus attempted to mark the most striking, or most applauded passages of the performance; but I am sensible that the great charm of all, which may be admired, but produces no applause, is that unity of the character, that absence of self, that fixed attention to the whole business of the scene, which were peculiar to this great actress. Though nearly half the season was over, she repeated Lady Randolph six times. Brereton acted Douglas; Bensley, Norval; and Palmer, Glenalvon.

The reader will not be displeased to find here the first cast of this play in London. Barry was the Douglas; Sparks, the Norval; Smith, Glenalvon; Ridout, Lord Randolph; the Lady Randolph, Mrs. Woffington; Anna, Mrs. Vincent. — *14th March, 1757.*

## CHAP. VII.

MRS. ABINGTON. — HER LADY BETTY MODISH. — LILLO. — COMEDY OF REPARATION. — MRS. CARGILL, LOST IN THE PACQUET, RETURNING FROM INDIA. — DETAILS OF THAT EVENT. — MRS. SIDDONS IN THE COUNTESS OF SALISBURY. — HALL HARTSHORN, WHETHER THE REAL AUTHOR OF THAT PLAY. — HER NEXT CHOICE, THOMPSON'S SIGISMUNDA. — THE PROLOGUE TO THIS PLAY EXAMINED. — MRS. SIDDONS'S PERFORMANCE OF THE HEROINE, ITS BEAUTIES. — EXHIBITION OF HER PORTRAIT IN THE TRAGIC MUSE. — MR. KEMBLE NEVER SAT TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. — COMPARED AT THAT TIME WITH HIS SISTER. — HIS HABITS AND STUDIES. — LOVE OF ACCURACY. — MACNALLY'S ROBIN HOOD. — COMMEMORATION OF HANDEL. — COWPER'S CENSURE CONTROVERTED. — AERDOUR OF MRS. SIDDONS. — MRS. ABINGTON. — LORD MANSFIELD. — MACKLIN. — THE GREAT DECISION AS TO THE RIGHTS OF AUDIENCE AND ACTOR.

Mrs. Abington, after the Christmas holidays, made her first appearance for the season in Lady Betty Modish in the *Careless Husband*. In my opinion nothing in the art ever went beyond this performance. It is not a little singular that this great actress never should have excited an imitator. Of all the Lady Betty's of the time, no one reminded me that she had ever seen her act or heard her speak; and this, by the way, is a solitary instance.

Every other excellent performer was admired and copied by the juvenile candidate for fame. Her taste, her ease, her grace, her point, her humour, were unattainable.

On the 10th of February, Lillo's most horrible tragedy of the Fatal Curiosity was brought out augmented by Mr. Mackenzie in a style sufficiently similar. Henderson and Mrs. Stephen Kemble rendered the audience completely miserable.

Miles Peter Andrews, more fashionable as a writer of Epilogues for the plays of others, than for his own comedies, produced at Drury Lane, on the 14th of February, a play called Reparation. This reparation is the legal marriage in the fifth act of a most amiable woman, who had been the victim of a pretended marriage, before the commencement of the play. Mrs. Siddons conferred the said character upon Miss Farren, who struggled through five acts of very heavy and disgusting incidents: the author was too fond of dishonourable attachments; for that to which I have alluded was not the only one in the play. Among a crowd of indiscretions, the author had the folly to allude to what was at that time called *back stairs influence*. In other words, his Majesty's change of his confidential servants. The expressions used begat a contest, and the author did not suffer by his own explosion, which, considering his profession, a gunpowder merchant, was

beyond all reasonable calculation. Perhaps his politics saved his play.

Captain Topham wrote both prologue and epilogue, replete with the usual points of the time ; and, indeed, they are by no means unentertaining, — the taste for mature beauty — the luxuries of debate — the India interest — Pacchierotti — Vestris — the *dicu* — and the dogs of the dance.

About the end of the month of February, Mrs. Cargill perished off Scilly, in the Nancy packet, returning from the East Indies. She was the original Clara in the Duenna ; was a very delightful singer, and one of the most captivating women of her time : but the head was not strong enough to regulate the conduct of the charmer, and she occasionally filled the page of scandal.

It may, perhaps, be proper to exhibit a fuller account of her conduct, and her fate, for the chance of recalling others to a just sense of their danger.

This lovely creature was found floating, in her *chemise*, as she had lain in her bed, and in her arms, inseparably clasped, the infant of which she had been delivered. The maternal instinct had not yielded even to death itself.

By a very early display of vocal and even comic talent, she had become an amazing favourite with the public. She increased in beauty as she advanced in her profession, and became an object of attrac-

tion to the dissolute. She at length eloped from her father's house, and I well knew the man who triumphed in her seduction. Her maiden name was Brown, and her father was a respectable tradesman, who was made miserable by her indiscretion. At length, tired even of disorder, she married; but her choice was, as might be expected, little advantageous to her; and she became a voluntary exile, in consequence, from her native land, and arrived in India, with a view to professional exertion, in a country that has wealth, at all events, to lavish upon amusement. She acted at Bombay several nights, with such a company as could be got together, and even went so far as to try the Grecian Daughter for her own benefit. It was solely for her own benefit, for she was totally inadequate to such a character. Her Eliza, in the Fitch of Bacon, a little reconciled the spectators to a temperature that was insufferable. The tickets had been put as high as two guineas each, and five hundred persons were too closely collected together.

The India Company, it appeared, had instructed the Council to send her back to Europe; but her residence in India would have been connived at, and she might have acquired an immense fortune, if she would have proceeded to Bengal; but her attachment to Captain Haldane seemed *then* to supersede every other consideration, and she determined to return with him to England. On



the 20th of September she acted again Maria in the Citizen, and her former part in the Fitch of Bacon. Her attraction was unbounded.

She was, however, another *Manon L'Escaut*, and the Abbe Prevost might have drawn his heroine from Mrs. Cargill. She was preparing to run from the very man, for whom fortune honourably acquired was a cheap and vulgar sacrifice. Before leaving Madras, her protector had been invited to dine with a large party at Captain Dempster's; but entertaining some doubt of the Syren's fidelity, he commanded a trusty servant to pay particular attention to her conduct. As he was sitting down to dinner, his suspicions were confirmed; intelligence was brought to him, that an elopement was certainly in agitation. He quitted the room abruptly, and found the fair deceiver just on the point of stepping into a carriage, that had been prepared to receive her by Mr. L., a writer in the company's service. She promised every thing for the future, and he forgave her levity. A confidential friend of his received her in a sort of honourable custody, and in a few days they sailed together in the Nancy packet for Europe, which was lost off Scilly, as has been related. Her body had been seven days under water. Her remains were buried at Scilly, by a private gentleman, at his own expense; and at his charge were interred fourteen of her fellow sufferers, and two infants. He caused as accurate descriptions as could be taken of the

bodies, to be drawn upon the spot, and carried a copy of them to London himself, to assist the friends of the parties in ascertaining their loss.

This melancholy expiation of all her errors left a tender regret for her loss, which outlived the usual duration of such tributes to the public favorites.

Some difficulty seemed to be felt by the management of Drury Lane Theatre to diversify the performances of Mrs. Siddons. She acted three times the Countess of Salisbury, in Hall Hartshorn's tragedy so called; and certainly she played the character very finely; but this gentleman had not the powers which such an actress required. However, whatever were his powers, they were singularly questioned. The celebrated Dr. Leland was suspected to have assisted him in the composition of the present, his only tragedy. But one proof that he was not the real author of the play, is extremely curious. An acquaintance complimented him upon the happy manner in which he had appropriated a speech from Homer—it is in the seventeenth book, and contains an allusion to Andromache's unarming Hector on his return from battle. Mr. Hartshorn denied that he had drawn any part of his materials from Homer; and this it seems was an identical passage. It was therefore inferred, that, not knowing what his own play contained, he could not have been the author. But the true inference was, that so natu-

ral circumstance, as a wife's aiding to unarm her hero, would occur to every author writing on such a subject; and the expressions are so remote, as to have nothing in common. Surely a man must be very ambitious of detecting plagiarism, and uncommonly doubtful of modern talent, who could so reason upon a very trite passage, written too by a gentleman who had been educated by Dr. Leland.

The next choice for Mrs. Siddons was Sigismunda, in Thomson's *Tancred and Sigismunda*. I cannot think that even this was a happy one. Perhaps something more than youthful passion was always inferred from the considerate grandeur of her general manner, and the mature intelligence of her expression. But the play offered a variety of a gentle and pleasing character. Garrick, too, had been fond of the part of Tancred, and every body loved the author of the *Seasons*.

The prologue to this play merits particular notice, for it expresses the author's own notions of the stage, at the time he wrote — what it had escaped from, and what he hoped might yet render it a source of elegant and rational amusement. He considered the stage to be then chaste and corrected: that no tinsel arts would longer conceal the want of genuine nature: the spell of the magician was dissolved, and that wand was broken, which used to waft you over sea and land: fairies and demons, the light and heavy troops of super-

stition, had faded from the view, and the ghost was bound in chains, that were never at curfew time to be again broken. Nor was the mere mortal bustle of the old stage allowed to these most rational times. The close-wedged battle was to be fought no longer by the prompter's troops: the awful senate itself could seldom be convened; the yawning fathers were condemned to nod behind the scenes. Nor did the modern reformers shew more forbearance as to the diction of poetry: the glittering false sublime was in course rejected by taste so pure; maids could not sigh in metaphor, nor die in rhyme: Rant was tumbled from his beloved gallery throne: descriptions, dreams, and even similies were abandoned.

But they still hoped to catch the lightning of Shakspeare's sublimity, or his deep knowledge of the human heart; the tender woe of Otway, and the pomp and golden lines of Rowe. The critic hazards but little who shall assert, that to an age, which banishes so much, little of what remained would be attainable. From Thomson's times to the present, even Rowe has neither been equalled nor approached. But as those critical days had really refined themselves out of all amusement, some of the proscribed powers have by degrees returned to their old stations, reinforced by superior machinery, and the most costly decoration. We at least *can* make up a shew, and prefer it to barren declamation in the style of French tragedy.

Tancred and Sigismunda is the only play by Thomson, that is even occasionally heard upon the modern stage. There are some contrasts of feeling, of which Mrs. Siddons availed herself. There is no doubt, however, that her few words upon the introduction of Osmond, at the close of the third act, equalled any effort of this great actress. The deliquium which overpowered her senses, so accurately given, and the surprising grace of the address upon her recovery, "Forgive my weakness," it is impossible to omit, in this record of beauties, that can never be described. It was by no means so difficult to manage the interview of explanation with Tancred, after she is the wife of Osmond. The last strange and somewhat indecorous intrusion of the king into her private apartment — the apostrophe to the scene of repose itself; and Tancred's entrance by the "secret way which his love had formerly contrived," for the purpose of passing their hours in vows of everlasting affection, excite a something of the risible in the grosser moderns, little accustomed to such cloistered purity. The death from the sword of Osmond is, however, the most natural occurrence in the world, and one of the most affecting; inasmuch as Sigismunda perishes for an imagined dereliction of her conjugal duties, at the very moment that she gives the brightest proof, that they overbalance in her breast the ardent passion she yet feels for Tancred.

At this time, that admirable judge of art, Mr. Burke, was a frequent attendant upon Mrs. Siddons. He was present at the *Sigismunda*, and led the applause with the usual ardour of his sensibility. He has left a few words as a tribute to her excellence, written at a time when he was all but engrossed by the French revolution. He is alluding to the savage triumph of Dr. Price, upon the virtual dethronement of Louis XVI. "Some tears," says he, "might be drawn from me, if such a spectacle were exhibited on the stage. I should be truly ashamed of finding in myself that superficial theatric sense of painted distress, whilst I could exult over it in real life. With such a perverted mind, I could never venture to shew my face at a tragedy. People would think the tears that Garrick formerly, or that Siddons not long since, have extorted from me, were the tears of hypocrisy; I should know them to be the tears of folly." — *Reflections*, 1790, p. 120.

Among the triumphs of Mrs. Siddons this year is to be noticed the completion and exhibition of her portrait as the Tragic Muse, by Sir Joshua Reynolds. There were persons, at one time, who affected to doubt the sincerity of that great artist, in his praises of Michael Angelo. But this picture alone proves the intimate feeling by Sir Joshua of his sublime conceptions. Whoever looks at Volpato's engraving of the prophet Joel, one of the sublime series of sybils and prophets in the

Sistine Chapel at Rome, will see what he has used, and admire his use of it, in the fine composition of the Tragic Muse. The sway and balance of the figures are the same. The magnificent effect of the drapery, suggested by the Italian, is rivalled by the encreased facility afforded to the English artist by the female habiliments. The management of the arms is entirely different, as the prophet is reading a scroll, which he spreads with both his hands, and the muse is in an attitude of inspiration, the object of which is sufficiently denoted by the attendant figures at the back of the throne, who with well-contrasted dejection and horror, support the dagger and the bowl, the usual expedients of dramatic catastrophe. There is, fortunately, a very accurate engraving from this picture, which, though not an identical portrait, like that of Kemble in Cato, is yet by far the grandest effort of the British School.

It is exceedingly to be regretted, that Mr. Kemble never sat to Sir Joshua, as he might have done, about the time that great man painted his sister. It would have been infinitely desirable to possess a juvenile portrait of him by Reynolds, to compare with those in advanced life by Sir Thomas Lawrence. A satisfaction that we fully enjoy, for instance, as to Mr. Windham.

Although I thus constantly bring the brother and sister together, I by no means think, that the performances of Mr. Kemble were, at the time of

which I am treating, equal in effect to those of Mrs. Siddons. Their talents, although they bore a strong family resemblance, differed considerably as to their power, and, in some respects, character. The organ of the brother was weaker than his sister's; he was, besides, very far indeed from his meridian. His studies were ardent, and embraced every thing collateral to his art. No man applied more than Mr. Kemble, at the same time that his habits were highly convivial. The mornings he devoted to business, the evenings, not seldom, to his friends. He wrote out his parts accurately from the authentic copies; he possessed himself, by degrees, of every critical work upon the drama. He was intimate, according to their different habits, with Mr. Steevens, Mr. Malone, and Mr. Reed, the editors and commentators of Shakspeare. On the vast ground of that poet, Mr. Kemble, like them, made his stand; and it was fortunate that he did so. Fame was sure to be acquired by contributing any way to that of Shakspeare. The singleness of our object contributes to its attainment. He saw that much was yet to be done in the representations of his plays, and determined, when he should acquire the necessary power, to bend every nerve to make them perfect, beyond all previous example. To do this, he was first himself to study the antiquities of his own and other countries; to be acquainted with their architecture, their dress, their weapons, their manners;



and he, by degrees, assembled about him the artists who could best carry his designs into effect. To be critically exact was the great ambition of his life; and that his future edifice might be lasting, he laid the foundations of it in TRUTH.

I love to shew the extent and accuracy of his studies, to prove to the young student the absolute necessity for equal pains on his part. For who ever derived from nature more powerful gifts than Mr. Kemble? He had the finest head, perhaps, that has ever been seen; a noble and admirably constructed figure; an articulation that was unequalled; fine taste, and a bold and poetic conception of character; and yet what was his lot in this his *adored* profession? LABOUR — incessant, interminable labour.

Among the novelties of the season I am to mention, as successful beyond the usual measure, Mr. Macnally's opera of Robin Hood. It had been a theme of great complacency in this country, that although nearly all things were corrupted among us, the administration of justice, like the private virtues of the sovereign, was exemplary and unquestioned. Macnally, of the profession himself, assumed the ungrateful distinction of attacking the justice of the country; and he found the spirit of the times in perfect unison with his own. The tale of Robin Hood became, under his management, a rather pleasing *pasticcio*, enforced with Goldsmith's Edwin and Angelina, and other

excrecences. Shield supplied seventeen new airs in this opera, and adapted twelve old ones. This delightful composer was not originally bred to music; and was seemingly, at one time, much more likely to have improved our naval architecture, than our operas; but what can withstand the favourite bent of genius? He is still among us; and as happy as good temper, good health, and an excellent heart can make him; gratified too with the continued popularity of much of his music.

But our musical records would be indeed imperfect, did we silently pass over the most important festival, that the talents of the country were ever called upon to celebrate. The reader sees that I allude to the famous Commemoration of Handel, in the Abbey Church of Westminster.

It originated in a conversation, in the year 1783, between Earl Fitzwilliam, Sir Watkin Williams Wynne, and Joah Bates, Esq., at the house of the latter. The object first pointed to an enjoyment collectively of all the first-rate vocal and instrumental talents; and it was shaped towards Handel by the reflection, that a complete century had now passed since his birth, and a quarter of one since the death of that great man. It was first submitted to the consideration of the Directors of the Concert of Ancient Music — they readily undertook to conduct it. The design at length was mentioned to the late king, who was little short of

an idolater as to the music of Handel. The plan, therefore, soon ripened under the royal patronage; and Wyatt undertook the accommodations for the visitors. The Bishop of Rochester made but one condition — that the Westminster Infirmary should be benefitted by the celebration. The profits of the first day, it was therefore agreed, should be equally divided between the Infirmary and the Musical Fund. The other days belonged exclusively to the Fund.

The performances in the Abbey were by daylight, those of the Pantheon in the evening. Mr. Wyatt's arrangements were judicious and beautiful. He raised a vast orchestra with its back to the great western door, beginning at an altitude of seven feet from the pavement. There he erected his organ, and commodiously placed the whole of his performers, in number exceeding 500. The great aisle under the orchestra, and the side galleries were so contrived, by the gradual elevation, that from every point the whole was seen, and the royal box terminated the prospect; it had its back, in course, to the quire.

As more than 4000 persons were provided with seats, there was no apprehension of danger, or even difficulty; and on Wednesday, the 26th of May, the first celebration was held. As the company prudently began to arrive early, by ten o'clock the assemblage was numerous, and by half after eleven, the whole immense space was peopled,

chiefly with ladies, in every tasteful variety of morning dresses, presenting a spectacle of the most graceful beauty, from which all cumbrous magnificence was banished.

About a quarter after twelve o'clock, their Majesties and their family arrived. The king first entered the royal box, and very perceptibly started with surprise at the noble scene before him. He stood a few seconds suspended in astonishment. The queen expressed an almost rapturous delight. Of the royal family, in the box with their Majesties, were Prince Edward, the Princess Royal, and the Princesses Augusta, Sophia, and Elizabeth.

As soon as the royal party were seated, they were saluted with the coronation anthem, and the entertainments of the day, divided into three parts, proceeded to their close. Since the roofing in of that sublime fabric, such a burst of harmony had never pealed through its aisles, as arose at the awful first motion of the leader's arm. Many were fainting, and numbers, of both sexes, relieved themselves by tears. It would be idle, at this distance of time, to reprint a mere catalogue of names; but I will, as a scale for future enjoyments of such a nature, record the numbers of each instrument, also of the singers, and the qualities of the voices.

First Violins	-	-	50	Violoncelloes	-	-	30
Second ditto	-	-	52	Bassoons	-	-	25
Tenors	-	-	32	Double Bassoon	-	-	1
Oboes	-	-	26	Double Basses	-	-	18

Trumpets	-	-	14	Drums	-	-	-	4
Trombones	-	-	3	Double Drum	-	-	-	1
Horns	-	-	12					

*Vocal Performers.*

Cantos	-	-	58	Basses	-	-	-	70
Altos	-	-	51					
Tenors	-	-	66	Total of the Band				513

On Thursday the Pantheon took its turn to honour the powers of the great composer; and very early in the afternoon, the crowd at the doors was extreme. This was, in course, upon a smaller scale, and there might be 2500 persons assembled. Mr. Wyatt, who erected the Pantheon, took care that the temporary structure should harmonise with the building. To give some idea of the brilliancy, 7000 lamps glittered from the dome. The selection, to accord with the place, was of a sprightly character; solemnity was reserved for the mysterious architecture of the Abbey, where on Friday, they rehearsed the Messiah, and 800 *half-guineas* were obtained for the charity; and the original design was completed on Saturday the 29th May. I snatch from innumerable excellencies, the air by Madam Mara, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and can only express my perfect conviction, that nothing human ever, before or since,

"Breath'd such divine enchanting ravishment."

There seemed to me a necessity to take this

brief notice of an entertainment, which, though not dramatic, I find, was thought somewhat *theatrical*. I shall give the result as to the receipts upon the whole, and the appropriation of the money.

	£.	s.	d.
Received the first day at Westminster Abbey, Wednesday, May 26, 1784 - - -	2966	5	0
Ditto, second performance in the Pantheon, Thursday, May 27 - - - -	1690	10	0
Ditto, third performance in the Abbey, Satur- day, May 29 - - - -	2626	1	0
Ditto, fourth performance, Thursday, June 3	1603	7	0
Ditto, fifth performance, Saturday, June 5 -	2117	17	0
Ditto, at three several rehearsals in the Abbey and Pantheon - - - -	944	17	10
Ditto, his Majesty's most gracious donation	525	0	0
Ditto, by sale of printed books of the words	262	15	0
Whole receipts	<hr/> £12,736 12 10 <hr/>		

*Disbursements.*

	£	s.	d.
Paid Mr. Wyatt for building in the Abbey and Pantheon - - - -	1969	12	0
Ditto Ashley, for paying the band, &c. -	1976	17	0
Ditto Rent and illumination of the Pantheon	156	16	0
Ditto advertising in town and country papers	236	19	0
Ditto printing books of the words * - -	289	2	0
Ditto door-keepers - - - -	102	1	6
Ditto use of organ - - - -	100	0	0
Ditto high and petty constables - -	100	5	0
Ditto gratifications - - - -	167	5	0
Ditto engraving cheques and tickets; medals, drawings, guards, porters, and sundry in- cidents - - - -	351	8	10

\* They did not sell them to this amount, it appears.

	£.	s.	d.
Ditto to the Society for decayed Musicians	6000	0	0
Ditto to the Westminster Hospital - -	1000	0	0
Balance in the treasurer's hands for subsequent demands - - - -	286	6	6
	<hr/>		
	£ 12,736	12	10
	<hr/>		

It will not be suspected that I view this commemoration with the feeling, which led the poet Cowper to regard it as prophane — the audience did *not* listen to “Messiah’s eulogy for Handel’s sake.”\* The result of the meeting was CHARITY, by which the most sacred spot cannot be sullied. Had there been any thing involving the interests of religion, the KING himself would have been the first man to point it out. Let it be remembered, too, that the very genius of the building seemed to have dictated the selection of the music; and that the sensations of the audience were of the purest and sublimest kind of which our natures are susceptible.

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To return to decided theatricals. Mrs. Siddons closed her second season on the 13th of May, with the performance of *Belvidera*. She had been a little more prudent in her exertions the present season, having only acted fifty-three times. As I did the first season, I shall on this, record the number of repetitions of each character. To shew

\* *Sake*, a word which Junius defines by the Latin *CAUSA*. The *cause* of the meeting was to enjoy divine harmonies in their highest perfection; — their *effects* must have been HOLY.

how a first impression keeps its ground, Isabella equalled in attraction the Gamester, though there she had the aid of Mr. Kemble.

Isabella	-	-	-	-	7 times.
Shore	-	-	-	-	3 ditto.
Euphrasia	-	-	-	-	4 ditto.
Belvidera	-	-	-	-	6 ditto.
Calista	-	-	-	-	1 ditto.
Zara	-	-	-	-	2 ditto.
Isabella (Measure for Measure)	-	-	-	-	5 ditto.
Mrs. Beverley	-	-	-	-	7 ditto.
Constance	-	-	-	-	4 ditto.
Lady Randolph	-	-	-	-	6 ditto.
Countess Salisbury	-	-	-	-	3 ditto.
Sigismunda	-	-	-	-	5 ditto.
					—
					53 times.
					—

The Covent Garden manager had very earnestly tried his strength in tragedy against the other theatre; but it was impracticable. The fashion followed in the train of Mrs. Siddons, with a perseverance that robbed it of its most appropriate epithet, fickleness. Mr. Harris, therefore, suffered “the courtiers to bear away the honours of the “tournament,” and allowed Mrs. Abington the muse of comedy, to close his season on the 2d of June, with a few lines written by herself, and which in course therefore avoided every allusion to the sister muse. They are unaffected, and to the purpose, and the reader will excuse my wish to preserve even the temporary effusions of the great comic actress.



" The play concluded, and this season o'er,  
 When we shall view these friendly rows no more,  
 In my own character let me appear,  
 To pay my warmest, humblest, homage here.  
 Yet how shall words, those shadowy signs, reveal  
 The real obligations which I feel?  
 Here they are fix'd, and hence they ne'er shall part,  
 ' While memory holds her seat,' within my heart!  
 This for myself. Our friends and chief behind,  
 Who bear your favors with a grateful mind,  
 Have likewise had me, as their proxy, own  
 Your kind indulgence to their efforts shewn;  
 Efforts, which, warm'd by such a fostering choice,  
 Again shall doubly court the public voice:  
 Till when, with duteous thanks, take our adieu!  
 'Tis meant to ALL, to you, and you, and you.\*  
 Hoping to find you here, in the same places,  
 With the same health, good spirits, and kind faces."

And even this from the gayest and most elegant of women, had an effect beyond the usual measure of such achievements, and shut up the theatre in the happiest mode imaginable.

At the close of the season, it may be proper to notice a very remarkable event, which occurred during its progress. On the 20th of February 1784, in the court of King's Bench, Lord Mansfield decided in the action *Macklin versus Colman*, damages laid at 1000*l*. His lordship, having accepted the reference, gave to the plaintiff 500*l*. each party paying their own costs.

The origin and progress of this affair are highly

\* Pit, Boxes, and Gallery.

important in a theatrical view, as they tend to ascertain the legal rights of that critical personage called the Town. On the 18th of November 1773, certain taylor's conceiving that Macbeth, as performed by Mr. Macklin, was rather a tragedy for *warm* weather, resolved that he should not be permitted to act the part: they therefore assembled from all the resorts of these "kings of shreds and patches," the Sun, and the Dog, and the Magpie, and the Phoenix, and denounced their vengeance against the veteran, in accents so fierce, that, though Macbeth had been changed to Shylock, nothing but his discharge from the theatre would induce them to spare the chandeliers and the benches. The elder Colman was himself compelled to make his first appearance on a *public* stage, and considering these wretches as his masters, yielded to their pleasure, and pronounced the gratifying words, "he is discharged."

Mr. Macklin first legally established against the leaders of these 'forcible feeblers' a charge of conspiracy; and Lord Mansfield in the kindest manner pressed his opinion that the compensation to be made by the parties to Mr. Macklin should be left to the master. Macklin himself, however, proposed a very moderate reimbursement for his losses, from which debt of justice, one of the conspirators, by name *only* William AUGUSTUS Miles, did himself the honour to abscond. In fact, Macklin had so narrowed his own satisfaction,

that he found himself absolutely out of pocket in respect of his costs on the information.

For two seasons the managers had persisted in their acquiescence, and he had therefore a right to the salary and the benefits, which so weak a conduct on their part had deprived him of. But here there was a slight difficulty, and that was, to establish whether Macklin was *engaged* at the theatre or not? A bill of discovery was therefore filed in Chancery; and this dramatic piece, upon the Horatian precept, *Nonnum prematur in annum*, had been before the *great* theatrical manager, the Lord Chancellor of England, for nearly nine years. This to a man, at that time certainly NINETY, was a grievance, which he was advised to terminate. The late Lord Kenyon was the barrister, who on the 6th of June 1781, gave it as his opinion, that the equity cause should be abandoned, and that he should try his fortune at law. This sound advice was ultimately attended with the success already stated. As soon as Macklin obtained the award, he made his opponent, the manager, a present of it. He interpreted rather like Portia than Shylock.

“ This bond doth give me here no jot of BLOOD.”

But the highly momentous parts of these proceedings are the two clear and satisfactory positions laid down by Lord Mansfield; one as to the rights of the audience, the other as to those of the

actor. For the first, he thus expresses himself.—  
“ Every man that is at the play-house, has a right  
“ to express his approbation or disapprobation  
“ INSTANTANEOUSLY, according as he likes either  
“ the acting or piece. That is a right due to the  
“ theatre — an unalterable right — they MUST HAVE  
“ THAT.”

For the second, thus he secures the actor or author. — “ It is not necessary to prove a parole,  
“ or written agreement, in order to make a conspi-  
“ racy : if persons concur in acts to do the same  
“ thing, upon any bad or improper principles, it  
“ is conspiracy.”

But the application of these *dicta* cannot be further extended, until a late period of these memoirs.

## CHAP. VIII.

MR. KEMBLE'S ACTING. — ITS PECULIAR CHARACTER. — THE GREAT AND BEAUTIFUL IN ART. — VULGAR NATURE. — MACBETH. — ACADEMIC STYLE. — MELODY. — FAMILIAR TOUCHES IN DICTION. — SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS QUOTED IN SUPPORT OF THE AUTHOR'S OPINIONS. — COLMAN'S SEASON 1784. — TWO TO ONE. — MRS. INCHBALD. — HOLCROFT'S NOBLE PEASANT. — HAYLEY'S LORD RUSSEL. — MISS KEMBLE. — GEORGE STEVENS. — ANECDOTE OF PALMER IN THIS PLAY. — MR. STEEVENS'S FURIOUS PREJUDICE AGAINST MRS. SIDDONS. — HAYLEY'S WANT OF DELICACY AND INCONSISTENCY EXPOSED. — RHYMING COMEDIES. — PEEPING TOM. — GEORGE ALEXANDER STEVENS. — MR. KEMBLE IN THE RECESS GOES TO LIVERPOOL AND MANCHESTER. — MRS. SIDDONS AT EDINBURGH. — DUBLIN. — CORK. — HER ILLNESS. — SYSTEMATIC ATTACKS UPON HER. — YOUNGER AND MRS. MATTOCKS. — THEIR TRIUMPH IN LEAR OVER HENDERSON AND MRS. SIDDONS. — TRAVESTY OF THE BEGGAR'S OPERA.

HAVING conducted Mr. Kemble to the close of his first season in town, it may be proper to consider now the peculiar style of his acting — by which I mean, in course, the idea he had formed to himself of the art, and the power with which it was to be executed. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his seventh discourse upon painting, has the following

most beautiful passage; by which we see the opinion of Mr. Burke verified as to that great artist: "To be such a painter, he was a profound and penetrating philosopher." To have altered the arrangement of it would have better suited my immediate object, but I would not take even a slight liberty with the composition of so great a writer.

"Perhaps no apology ought to be received for offences committed against the vehicle (whether it be the organ of seeing, or of hearing), by which our pleasures are conveyed to the mind. We must take care that the eye be not perplexed and distracted by a confusion of equal parts, or equal lights, or offended by an unharmonious mixture of colours, as we should guard against offending the ear by unharmonious sounds. We may venture to be more confident of the truth of this observation, since we find that Shakspeare, on a parallel occasion, has made Hamlet recommend to the players a precept of the same kind,—never to offend the ear by harsh sounds: *In the very torrent, tempest, and whirlwind of your passion*, says he, *you must acquire and beget a temperance, that may give it smoothness*. And yet, at the same time, he very justly observes, *The end of playing, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirrour up to nature*. No one can deny, that violent passions will naturally emit harsh and disagreeable tones: yet this great

“poet and critic thought that this imitation  
 “of nature would cost too much, if purchased  
 “at the expense of disagreeable sensations, or,  
 “as he expresses it, of *splitting the ear*. The  
 “poet and actor, as well as the painter of genius,  
 “who is well acquainted with all the variety and  
 “sources of pleasure in the mind and imagination,  
 “has little regard or attention to common  
 “nature, or creeping after common sense. By  
 “overleaping those narrow bounds, he more effect-  
 “ually seizes the whole mind, and more powerfully  
 “accomplishes his purpose. This success is igno-  
 “rantly imagined to proceed from inattention to all  
 “rules, and a defiance of reason and judgment;  
 “whereas it is in truth acting according to the  
 “best rules and the justest reason.

“He who thinks nature, in the narrow sense  
 “of the word, is alone to be followed, will pro-  
 “duce but a scanty entertainment for the imagin-  
 “ation: every thing is to be done with which it  
 “is natural for the mind to be pleased, whether it  
 “proceeds from simplicity or variety, uniformity  
 “or regularity; whether the scenes are familiar  
 “or exotic; rude and wild, or enriched and cul-  
 “tivated; for it is natural for the mind to be  
 “pleased with all these in their turn. In short,  
 “whatever pleases has in it what is analogous to  
 “the mind, and is, therefore, in the highest and  
 “best sense of the word, *natural*.” — *Works*,  
 vol. i. p. 209. ed. 1798.

In this passage may be developed the principles of every thing that is great and beautiful, in art, and consequently whatever is poetical in the conception of character. The actor who looks no farther than common nature for the expression of the passions, will be short of the true mark; for though we are as men all liable to the same influences, they are greatly modified by our personal qualities and individual habits. To instance in the character of Macbeth. An actor of no great elevation of mind, but of strong imagination, may throw out in his whole manner so speaking a terror, that he shall certainly be the true and perfect image of one who had committed a murder; but he may still leave a question to the spectator, whether that murderer be *Macbeth*, or not? Does the actor, for instance, exhibit to us a noble nature absolutely sunk and depraved by that act, or a base one losing its very cunning in the fear of detection? Is he a hero, who descends to become an assassin, or a common stabber, who rises to become a royal murderer?

The direction in these cases is uniform. Look at the poet; you will see with what properties he invests his character; embody them, and you will be its just and natural representative. To be sure: there can be no doubt of it. The difficulty is to hold steadily the conception thus formed, and to express all the characteristics of which it is composed. It is unnecessary to go minutely into the



character of Macbeth; it has been analysed with great skill by Mr. Kemble himself, by Mr. Whately, Professor Richardson, and others. The moral progression of the part must be the constant inspirer of the actor; above all, he must keep before him the influence of those *spirits who know all mortal consequences*; without this mental discipline to regulate the whole, the mere external demonstrations will often appear forced, disjointed, and unnatural; a regard to this principle removes all seeming inconsistency, and combines the whole into one great and consistent character.

The difficulties of such a task may well astonish our minds, and it may be reasonably enough asked, whether all this is done by an actor on the stage? The answer is ready; such must be the process: in all efforts approaching to perfection, this is done. There is a mode of passing through a character, with no more effort, than will satisfy a common knowledge of it. If the actor seem to be in earnest, is sufficiently noisy, declaim in the received tune, or has some strange one of his own — if he practice all the tricks of his profession — if his body be disposed in suitable attitudes, his features wrung into what he calls expression, and he look successfully, there will be usually little doubt of its being a very fine performance; so no doubt it is, of what every body alike has done upon the common stages of England for a hundred years together. Is *this* NATURE well understood, is

*this* ART in its perfection? Neither; it is a drilled exercise, which a *boy* has been made to do, who never comprehended the reason for any one thing that he did.

It may now be seen, that where characters are finely made out by the poet, where qualities of the same mind oppose each other, where the passions themselves have a thousand shades admitting of palpable discrimination, it is no light study that HE takes up, who would indeed become an actor. The short or royal road here is — “Ask your own heart, how you would feel in a similar situation.” Again we say, right; nothing can be better. But WHAT is that situation? How is it to be known but by accurate study? How is it to be expressed but by the most entire assimilation of the actor to the part? The qualities must be seemingly alike, or pass for similar: all the delicacies of character must be conceived, or they cannot be expressed; without much refinement in the actor, they will not even be suspected. He should therefore be a man, mentally and personally, highly accomplished.

What I have above endeavoured to point out may be termed the academic or critical style of acting: it is built on a metaphysical search into our nature, and a close attention to all the minutiae of language. It deals, therefore, in *pauses*, which were not before made; for the unlearned actor cared little about the transitions of thought. He

never examined, of the associations of our ideas, how much in dramatic dialogue is suppressed, and never dreamt that the rapid junction of ideas totally unconnected is violent and unmeaning. It lays a peculiar stress upon words, which before received no emphasis; because it analyses every thing by which meaning is conveyed, and can leave nothing to chance, which ought to be settled by reason. In short, what philosophical criticism had discovered to be properties of Shakspeare's characters, the actor now endeavoured to shew. To be a just representative of the part, he was to become a living commentary on the poet.

It will be said, — it has been said, all this is but the vanity of the art; a mixed and popular assembly desires none of it; they are better satisfied with a representation less refined. The answer to this is obvious. I say then, if ANY PART of such mixed assembly require this excellence, it should be had; at first for *their* enjoyment, at length for that of "*lower messes*," who, though originally "*purblind to the business*," will soon from imitation, and at last from judgment, prefer this refinement in their amusements, to the gross and vulgar style formerly endured.

But if such attention be paid to the exhibition of character, there is also to be noticed an inferior branch of the actor's art, addressed exclusively to the ear. The verse, that has been modulated with the happiest skill, claims to be uttered in a cadence

of corresponding melody : the language of poetry is by no means common speech, — nor is it to be lowered by a rugged and colloquial familiarity. The great poet knows his meaning perfectly, and always shows it to his intelligent reader. He gives, occasionally, passages of high declamatory music, which must be sustained by the actor's organ. He, at intervals, throws in brief touches of feeling, in the language of daily life ; and the simpler the expressions are, the more brilliant are the effects they produce. Write the whole play in such a diction, and it would be a creeping, prosaic, vulgar performance. One of these familiar touches (the reader will supply hundreds) occurs to me in *Macbeth* ; after the spirit of Banquo has vanished, the trembling usurper falters out to his reproaching queen —

“ If I stand here, I saw him.”

The reader, who remembers the tone and gesture which from Mr. Kemble conveyed this assertion to the audience, will know how truly he could hit the merely natural, when no other considerations called upon him for a more elevated style of utterance. The learned and perfect actor will at all times be the genuine representative of the poet in the character. He will never debase his conceptions, nor deprave his language. The flights of fancy will seem to spring from *his* imagination ; the verse will flow from organs accustomed to be delighted with its music.

As the modern taste in acting differs so considerably from mine, I hope to be excused for strengthening myself with one more passage from Sir Joshua Reynolds : —

“ I must observe, (says that judicious critic in his thirteenth discourse) that even the expression of violent passion, is not always the most excellent in proportion as it is the most natural : so great terror and such disagreeable sensations may be communicated to the audience, that the balance may be destroyed by which pleasure is preserved, and holds its predominancy in the mind ; violent distortion of action, harsh screamings of the voice, however great the occasion, or however natural on such occasion, are, therefore, not admissible in the theatric art. Many of these allowed deviations from nature arise from the necessity which there is, that every thing should be raised and enlarged beyond its natural state ; that the full effect may come home to the spectator, which otherwise would be lost in the comparatively extensive space of the theatre. Hence the deliberate and stately step, the studied grace of action, which seems to enlarge the dimensions of the actor, and alone to fill the stage. All this unnaturalness, though right and proper in its place, would appear affected and ridiculous in a private room ; *quid anim deformius, quam scenam in vitam transferre?*”

Such, I know, were the conceptions, which Mr. Kemble entertained of his art; and on these principles labouring incessantly through life, he became, at length, the most scientific artist that perhaps ever graced the stage. But a great deal was to be done, to satisfy desires so extensive; he pleased others at a cheaper rate than would gratify himself; and he frequently expressed his dissatisfaction at an imperfect performance, by a very homely phrase — “I acted to-night THIRTY SHILLINGS a week.”

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My attention is now called away to a scene of lighter amusement, Mr. Colman's theatre in the Haymarket, which opened its summer season on the 2d of June, with a new prelude, temporary in its subject, and political in its application. The great Westminster election was here that of two managers of the winter theatres, and the stage had its female influence as well as the hustings. Mrs. Buckram and Mrs. Simper, to be sure, were not restricted to the polite language of Mrs. Hobart, and the enchanting Duchess of Devonshire, whose condescensions were certainly *courteous*, and the author was frequently reminded of the danger of such a subject. The election of the managers was not Mr. Colman's best prelude. The audience waited for that till the 19th, when

the first dramatic offering of his son was brought out — a musical comedy in three acts, called *Two to One*. The young author was then in his twenty-first year, full of whim, new to the stage, but born to be its ornament. I recollect nothing of the plot; indeed he never encumbered himself with much intricacy of this sort; but he was from the first the same sprightly, peculiar writer, that he remains at sixty. His father contributed a prologue to his production, which *did not* avoid either the parent bird, or our special old friend, Dædalus. But he bore his young eaglet to the sun, and left him, with a *joke*, to try his proper pinions.

“ With dulness should the sire and son be curst,  
And dunce the second follow dunce the first,  
The shallow stripling’s vain attempt you’ll mock,  
And damn him — for a *CHIP* of the *old BLOCK*.”

The summer of 1784 was highly productive. That elegant writer, and very beautiful actress, Mrs. Inchbald, was fortunate enough to send a farce to Mr. Colman, on the subject of the balloon, then travelling, in the imagination, to distant regions, and astonishing the natives of another continent, with the descending absurdities of Europe. The inhabitants of Wapping enter the dangerous precincts of the Mogul’s seraglio, and claim the privilege of spies, as usual, under the character of ambassadors. The farce has always

been attended with abundant laughter, and upon its success, the author ventured to remind the little manager, that her *Mogul* had an elder sister, who had, for three years, in vain solicited his attention. He found her now perfectly accomplished, and she came out the following year, under the title "I'll tell you what."

On the 12th of July, Miss Woollery appeared, the first time on any stage, in the character of Sigismunda. She was a very beautiful woman, but her powers were not of the highest class. She, however, was fashionably supported, and therefore, on this small stage, was permitted to perform the heroines for a time. Miss Kemble, too, was exceedingly admired in the interesting part of Harriet, in the *Guardian*.

Novelty was literally the order of the day in the Haymarket house: on the 2d of August, Mr. Holcroft brought out his opera of the Noble Peasant, an attempt to write of the times of Robin Hood, in the style of our ancient authors; a work extremely difficult to perform, and usually full of anachronisms, both as to thought and expression. Although it may be perfectly true, that the style of dramatic composition in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, as well as the genius of that era, far transcends any subsequent effort, yet I cannot see the slightest utility in a modern author's trying to become an ancient. We wear the habit ungracefully that we do not usually wear. If we think



for ourselves, such thoughts will not easily take the dress of ancient diction. If we allow our masters both to think and speak for us, the work is contemptible, because it is not ours, and cannot be THEIRS. We never so thoroughly understand ancient manners, as to become the speaker of our language in any past age : when it is best done, how very meagre is the wit ; and how the scenes of our old comedies are plundered, to present even a sprinkle of every-day phraseology, in which, to give a resemblance, the *exclamations* of our ancestors are forced so upon the ear, that they seem to form the staple commodity of human intercourse.

Mr. Holcroft struggled, too, with the dwarf and the fool, and the archery of former times ; he found it was no slight task he had assumed, and stated his difficulties plainly. I cannot remember now much of his language, but his music was well adapted and composed by Shield, and the piece rather added to his dramatic reputation.

On the 18th of the month, the tragedy of Lord Russel, by Mr. Hayley, was also represented at this theatre. He had written this, and one other tragedy, Marcella, for a private theatre, and it remained to be tried how compositions, so very sober and regular, would gratify the taste of a public auditory. I believe it answered the most sanguine expectations. The characters interested by their virtue : but the muse of Hayley was not, I think, vigorous enough for tragedy ; his verses

were too uniform in their structure, and his diction rather feeble and flat. Here is one of his purest passages.

"*Russel.* Thou dear angelic spirit ! tis from thee  
That I have learnt the truest fortitude ;  
A courage built upon a heavenly basis.—  
O gracious being ! who has guided us  
Through fourteen years of pure domestic bliss,  
The best and rarest of thy gifts to man,  
Accept, as tribute for thy blessings past,  
Our meek submission in this trying hour !"

There is nothing of poetry here but the metrical arrangement of the words.

Miss Woollery acted his Countess, and Miss Kemble the Lady Margaret. The latter very amiable actress was extremely diffident, and needed every encouragement to enable her to develope the talents which she really possessed. She had one very powerful friend indeed, the late George Steevens, Esq. the commentator upon Shakspeare. I have good reason for saying, that he led the family to imagine there was something serious in the attentions which he was paying this young and beautiful actress ; but it ended with the usual discreet assurances of zealous friendship and unbounded admiration. On this occasion, his efforts to aid Miss Kemble betrayed him into an indiscretion, which I find thus recorded in the Memoirs of the poet Hayley, vol. i. p. 323.

It happened that Steevens, who was described by Dr. Johnson, as not malignant, but only "uniformly mischievous," for something, or for nothing, now amused himself by assailing Mrs. Siddons, and hoped to mortify her by magnifying the theatrical talents of her sister, to whom he paid incessant attention. This induced him to write the following letter to Hayley: —

"Hampstead Heath, July 27, 1784.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"You have it in your power at once to confer a great favour on me, and do eminent service to a good and lovely girl. Your 'Lord Russel,' appears in the course of next week, at the Haymarket. Miss Kemble, who has succeeded beyond the expectations of her warmest friends, in the very delicate part of Harriet, in *The Guardian*, is to personate your Lady Margaret; and I will venture to promise, she shall execute all you could desire within the compass of so small a character. If her natural timidity could once be overcome, she would make a distinguished figure in her profession, as her mind is every way stronger and more cultivated than her sister's. Her diffidence in herself is her chief enemy; and I know not how it can be dislodged, but by praise, when she has deserved it. If, therefore, you, whose approbation is fame, would bestow a dozen lines on her performance of Margaret, you will be guilty

only of an honest stratagem, to procure her that confidence in her own abilities, which I am certain will operate to her future advantage. You know what you should hope to find in the representative of Old Bedford's daughter, and no one can describe it half so well. If you will oblige me with a few verses, which I may send to her in your name and in your handwriting, the day after she has trod in your buskins, you will, as I observed before, prove the best friend she ever met with. You are one of the few people whom one can venture to solicit in the cause of an *honest woman*.\* You have my assurance, that your lines shall not be printed without your immediate permission. I shall persuade her you came up incog. to see your own play, returned into the country next morning, and not knowing her address, intrusted me with the delivery of your compliment. I shall attend every representation of your play, and will transmit you a faithful account of its success, which I do not doubt of. Your Lady Russel, though patronised by a number of clamorous friends, will prove only a piece of beautiful imbecility. I saw her Sigismunda twice; her voice is hardly audible, and her face, though handsome, exhibits no variety of expression.

\* Tasty language this for Steevens; yet he knew to whom he was writing, and "*something* he must mean." Observe the *ease* he conveys to an apprehensive author, by assuring him, that his heroine would prove a "*piece of beautiful imbecility*."

“ If I can prevail on you to oblige me, let me beg you will write the lines on a separate sheet of paper, and enclose them in your letter. I shall pay with cheerfulness for a packet of a pound weight, on such an occasion.

“ With my best compliments to the fair Eliza, whom I entreat to back my petition,

“ I remain,

“ Your ever faithful and affectionate,

“ G. STEEVENS.

“ P. S. On second thoughts, if you will allow the verses to go into the St. James's Chronicle, after they have been presented to the lady, you will do her cause more extensive service. But, without your leave, they shall be circulated only among her friends, in manuscript. I am sure she will be more flattered by your notice, than by any present that could be made her.

“ I hear you have re-purchased all your works from Dodsley; a circumstance I much rejoice in. Is it true? If it is, we may expect, I hope, a handsome edition. Pray let me know how the ‘ Lord Russel ’ went off at Chichester. I fear the Collins's did little justice to it. I have discharged Hernandez\* with better success than I

\* Hernandez is the *villain* in Mr. Hayley's tragedy of *Marcella*; Steevens acted the character it seems in private. Iago is a saint to Hernandez. Dr. Young wrote one act on the subject of this tragedy. The *declamation* of Steevens was beautiful indeed.

expected ; and most heartily wish our Marcella was to be your Rachael. I never heard a line so forcibly spoken as she spoke one of yours :

“ ‘ And all the blazing ruin rushes on thee.’ ”

“ Adieu.

“ My best wishes to nurse ; she will see I have not forgotten an old friend, though I am soliciting for a new one.”

Whether the writer of this very singular letter intended only to gratify the young actress he patronised, or had an insidious design of drawing the dramatic author into a situation that might render him ridiculous, Hayley could never perfectly ascertain : but several hints which he had lately received of the critic's envious disposition, induced him to consider the strange request as a snare, which it became him to elude with civility and good humour. He therefore returned the following reply, and Steevens wrote to him no more.

“ Eartham, July, 1784.

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ I CAN hardly believe you serious in your request. If you are so, your diffidence in yourself is certainly equal to that of the lady you patronise ; and you must allow me to correct it. Can you really, with a grave countenance, desire

me to praise an actress, of whose merit I cannot probably be a spectator, when you yourself have not only the advantage of studying all her excellence, but the highest power of describing it in poetry, animated by personal regard? My friend Romney might as well write to a Venetian painter\*, and request from him an ideal portrait of a lady in London, who is only within the reach of his own excellent pencil.

“As I am convinced that the talents of Miss Kemble must have received infinite improvement from your critical instructions, I am willing to do her the justice of believing, that no poetical praise could animate her so highly as that which flows from your pen. Were she not contented with this, she could but ill deserve the panegyric of any other encomiast.

“So much for the lady! whom I will hope to thank in person hereafter, for the graces that, I doubt not, she will give to the short character in my tragedy which she condescends to represent.

“As to myself, I might at present very fairly plead an utter inability to compose such a compliment as you desire; for I happen to be surrounded with carpenters, whose hammers stun me from five in the morning till eight at night, being

\* One of the happiest illustrations imaginable. Whenever Mr. Hayley, in prose composition, kept away from the *florid* and the *fulsome*, he wrote with power, purity, and elegance. As an instance, take the life of Milton, for G. Nicol.

eagerly engaged in fitting up a new library. And might also remind you that my compliance with your request, were it possible, might throw me into a condition truly ridiculous; as you will allow, if you recollect the following squib, composed by a nameless wag, upon a luckless dramatic author of the last age:

“ ‘ Chance, who loves with bards to quarrel,  
And to a nettle turn their laurel,  
Contrived to spoil this bard's design,  
For ere his heroine spoke a line,  
Though with his friends the house was crammed,  
His play unluckily was damned ! ’ ”

“ I am sorry to hear you speak of the new actress in terms so unpromising; but I have the comfort of knowing, that the gentleness of Lady Russel does not demand any vehement animation. As the play and the principal actress are both of so quiet a character, I ought, perhaps, to wish you a good nap through the two last acts of the performance. I shall, however, be obliged to you for the account you kindly offer to send me; and I trust I am philosopher enough to support with composure any fate that may befall the production.

“ Adieu! Let me exhort you to set a juster value on your own poetical talents, and believe me

“ Very faithfully yours,

“ W. HAYLEY.



"P. S. Eliza is escaped to Chichester, from the noise, dust, and confusion of our little castle, which is an absolute chaos at present, as both the old library and the new one, are in the hands of workmen. Nurse, who is a Hebe of threescore, returns your kind salutation. Adieu.

"To George Steevens, Esq. Hampstead."

The late Mr. Hayley seems to have written more *sensitively* than any author of his time. Among a thousand declarations of his delicacy, there is one which caught my eye as to the SACRED nature of epistolary communications. It would be difficult, I imagine, in this view, to account for his publication of Steevens's indiscreet letter. The commentator had neither been asked, nor had he given his consent to the publication of it. Steevens to be sure, was no more, and, therefore, it might be done without challenging any of his dexterous and powerful resentment; but there was a decision in it not likely to be agreeable to *one* person still living; and it was besides assumed, on no authority at all, that he had conceived a *furious prejudice* against Mrs. Siddons. Surely not against her powers as an actress. There were notions entertained at this time, that an extreme frugality obtained in her domestic arrangements; and Steevens himself was remarkable for ostentation without hospitality. Every body heard of his plate, and the ceremony with which his table was served;

but his meals were mostly solitary; as his evenings were devoted to his literary labours. I have read one of his *jeux d'esprits* upon the subject alluded to, malicious enough, to be sure; but I never heard from him, or of him, any thing to the disparagement of the *genius* of the great actress. The most positive success of Miss Kemble would not have mortified Mrs. Siddons. Why were the two sisters in town, or how came they to be engaged at the same theatre, but by the affectionate solicitude, and earnest request of their transcendant relation? Alas! they might both of them have made immense advances in the art, and never then have approached the point of any reasonable competition. I myself saw all that they did upon the stages of London, and could not but know the current opinion of their merits. But leaving Mr. Hayley's notion as to Steevens's *furious prejudice*, to be established or not, by the story he tells, it is but justice to let the able commentator speak for himself, of Mrs. Siddons; and he evidently here meant to give *immortality* to his opinion, by affixing it to the page of Shakspeare. In the year 1793, he published an edition of the poet, the last seen through the press by himself. In the advertisement he thus alludes to her. He is speaking of Mrs. Crawford's alteration of the concluding speech of Lady Randolph, in Douglas, from the obscure intimation "make a woman bold," to

"Such a son,

"And such a husband, drive me to my fate."

“ Here we perceive,” says Mr. Steevens, “ that fate, the old post-horse of tragedy, has been saddled to expedite intelligence, which was meant to be delayed till the necessary moment of its disclosure. Nay, further, the prompter’s book being thus corrupted, on the first night of the revival of this beautiful and interesting play at Drury Lane, the same spurious nonsense was heard from the lips of Mrs. SIDDONS; lips, whose MATCHLESS POWERS should be sacred only to the task of animating the purest strains of dramatic poetry.”

This was doing, as Smollet had done with respect to Garrick, at all events making atonement in a work of *fact*, for the injury done in one of *fiction*. For I think there can be no doubt that the letter to Hayley was an attempt to render him supremely ridiculous; but it was too gross for even the false appetite of Hayley’s literary intercourse to swallow, as the reader has seen by his reply. Disappointed of his prey, Steevens at once threw off the mask, and never sought nor wished any renewal of the acquaintance. But whatever may be thought of Steevens, his friend at Eartham, perhaps unconsciously, rivalled him at last in wantonness of mischief. Let it be remembered, that Hayley celebrates, with inimitable inconsistency, the VIRTUES as well as TALENTS of Steevens upon his tomb: and then leaves a letter for publication, which tends to show him *faithless* to a friend,

*malicious* to acknowledged excellence, and a *treacherous ally* to a young and beautiful actress, whom he affected to consider injured by the undue ascendancy of her own sister. O, the *dear Hermit*!

Upon the subject of this representation of Lord Russel, Palmer's brother, Robert, once told me a ludicrous anecdote, to which I incline to give some credit. It seemed that Palmer had done with Lord Russel, as he did with many other characters, that is, totally neglected to study the words of the part; and in this dilemma he bethought himself of an expedient, which answered astonishingly, and, indeed, by the audience, was never suspected. As much of Lord Russel was unlearned on the night of its performance, he thought it was better to speak from some character that he did know, than one that he did not; whenever, therefore, he felt himself at a loss, he dexterously introduced some passages from the Earl of Essex, which he contrived to fit into the cues received by Lord Russel; and thus, really giving some parts, and masking others, he gained another day to perfect himself in the character. It will be remembered that to his audience this play was completely new; while the dialogue was in progress, and not seemingly irrelevant, there were no means of detection.

The fate of Lord Russel was extraordinary, — he was murdered even in the representation. Two nights after the above exploit, a tragedy on this

subject, by a Dr. Stratford, was, by permission, performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. The characters were principally sustained by Irish gentlemen, who set the author's language to a tune, which gave it a very surprising effect. I believe I could assign the real names to all the characters, but I am unwilling to revive a laugh that ought to die with the occasion. The bill of the day expressed that the parts "were kindly undertaken to be represented by ladies and gentlemen, who never performed on any stage." Their kindness was extreme, for I well remember, that ten years after the fatal 20th of August, there was no mentioning this tragedy before any man who had been present, without his being seized with a convulsive fit of laughter, which, probably, neither Parsons, nor Edwin, nor Liston himself, ever so completely provoked. The doctor issued his tickets from Cecil-Street; — Mr. Fosbrook let places at the theatre; — the play was repeated four times, and filled a very distinguished place in the conversation of the day.

In my allusion to Mr. Hayley's Lord Russel, I have noticed the singular supplement of Mr. Palmer's ingenuity. The volume of these compositions for a private theatre, together with tragedies that in their composition had nothing remarkable but their being divided into three acts, contained sundry comedies written in rhyme, which was a novelty in our language, that seemed an im-

provement to the author, Mr. Hayley. It was an easy sparkling versification, partaking in a great degree of the effect of Anstey's New Bath Guide. And, although the rhymes were too sensibly felt upon the ear, and the dialogue became consequently a series of epigrams, yet the graceful ease, with which this author went through his morrice dance, gave an unexpected pleasure, that only lost its charm by its continuance. If he conceived his notion of the fitness of rhyme, from its use in French comedy, he could not but know, that every effort is made by both the writer and speaker of that language, to prevent the rhymes from coming hardly upon the ear; that the diversification of alternate masculine and feminine terminations greatly aids such effort; and, indeed, the great charm on their comic stage is the close resemblance of such verse to the common dialogue of life; the care of the verse only imposing upon the poet the impossibility of very facile composition, which renders mere prose too often both trivial and incorrect.

One of these comedies Palmer was allowed to take for his benefit at the summer theatre; and accordingly, he brought out the Two Connoisseurs. But he had little calculated upon the difficulty of a performance so strange to the green room. Hardly any of the company could become perfect in so long a series of rhymes; the anxiety to retain or supply them, rendered the whole dialogue tor-

menting to all parties, and like nothing that could reasonably pass between human creatures. Restrained, too, in the very matter by his manner, the poet seemed to want ideas, or recur too frequently to favourite ones. It is astonishing how often he alludes to the subject of the following quatrain, which closes his first act :

“ Well, ye Gods ! if, whenever my nuptial star twinkles,  
I should wed an old hunter of odd periwinkles,  
To engage her nice eye with unchanging attraction,  
May I turn in her arms to a *cold petrification*.”

But it was not in the power of Palmer's greatest enemy to have done him so much injury, as by this choice he did himself. The prompter should have taken his station, where his brother sits of the Italian stage, to have been able to give him the word as often as he wanted it. All his trick and finesse could not conceal from the audience how shamefully he was imperfect.

Four days after (September the 6th) Mr. O'Keefe's farce of Peeping Tom began its diverting course, in which I have already spoken of the excellence of Edwin. The little theatre this season abounded in novelties of every attractive form ; there were several new performers, whose efforts do not come within my plan, which must be restricted to the striking incidents of the times of which I write.

At the date just mentioned, expired at Baldock, in Hertfordshire, George Alexander Stevens,

famous for his very characteristic songs, which for many years were the delight of all convivial societies, and for his lecture on heads, some faint idea of which I derived in my youth from my father, who greatly admired him : I mean as to his manner of delivering it ; for Lee Lewes was too inveterate a mannerist to give a notion of his masterly predecessor. I do not think that it was ever carefully and authentically printed, and I am unwilling now to consider a work of infinite humour, in copies long since devoted to the stalls.

In the earlier part of his career, G. A. Stevens seems to have been ambitious of the fame of that irregular humourist Tom Brown, whose wild necessitous course he repeated, to the regret of his friends and the disgrace of his genius. Stevens's lecture rendered him at length independent ; and, in the decline of his faculties, he had not to struggle with poverty. In a state of mental imbecility, he is said to have predicted the exact time of his dissolution, and to have verified his prediction.

I will not suppose such a coincidence the result of any particular illumination. We notice the few anticipations of this sort that are realized, and pass over the myriads which the event disproves. But in the close of a fevered and irregular existence, the very conceit of the mind may "tend to rob " the treasury of life."

During the summer recess Mr. Kemble went with his brother Stephen and his very interesting



wife to Liverpool and Manchester, where he repeated his favourite performances in town. Mrs. Siddons acted at Edinburgh eleven nights, and on her own night performed *Euphrasia*. The Scottish gentry distinguished themselves proudly on this occasion, and paid five shillings for a seat in the pit. From Edinburgh she went to Dublin, where a splendid engagement attended her, 1000 guineas and a benefit. Cork, too, produced a very important addition, for her gains were altogether estimated at 3500*l.* on this tour of summer amusement. More might have been done, but that she was taken ill ; and this very illness was the cause of a cruel attack upon her, which strove to injure her success, by insinuations that she wanted the kindly feelings of her profession. Great care was taken to notice any casual appearance of Mrs. Abington at the summer theatre ; and the applause of Miss Farren by that lady was praised as a mark of becoming liberality in a great genius, above so pitiful a feeling as jealousy. It was strenuously asserted, that Mrs. Siddons never did applaud any actress upon the stage ; and that, beside the refusal of this cheap acknowledgment of their merits, she was become mercenary to her brethren, and forgetful of the difficulties from which she had so happily emerged ; the writers added, that greatly as the public had rewarded her exertions, it was especially incumbent upon her to reflect on others the bounty which had so illustrated herself and family. There

was, ultimately, no doubt whatever, that these insinuations were kept up in town by a foul and malignant conspiracy ; and they put on the various garbs of reports, sometimes given with regret, at others indignation ; seasoned with occasional fears, that there must be something in them ; and hopes, rather faintly coloured, that all might be explained to the satisfaction of the public. In plain terms, it was resolved, on her ensuing appearance at Drury Lane, to drive her with insult from the stage, and blight, if not destroy, the laurels she had proudly worn. In the succeeding chapter the success of these base arts will be given somewhat in detail.

Henderson made a very profitable excursion this summer to Edinburgh, and afforded that enlightened capital the opportunity of comparing his Hamlet particularly with what Kemble had so recently displayed. He was considered to be one of the most judicious actors that had ever appeared there ; and, like Garrick, he could avail himself of infinite versatility to complete his charm. With Hamlet, he also gave Shylock, Falstaff, Macbeth, Don John, and he repeated the fat Knight for his benefit.

As the deputy manager of Drury Lane Theatre, and a gentleman of considerable talent, it is proper for me to notice the death of Mr. Joseph Younger, at Liverpool, on the 3rd of September, in his 50th year. He was proprietor of the Liverpool and

Manchester theatres. As an actor, he was but indifferent in any line, and extremely limited in all; yet he had a sound judgment and very extensive professional knowledge. To show the fluctuation of popular favour, it may be as well to record that, about seven years before Mr. Younger's death, he found himself at Mattocks's theatre in Birmingham, opposed to Henderson, who was at Yates's in the same town. The play was *Lear*, at both houses; and thus curiously contrasted in the principal characters:—

' *Lear* - - - HENDERSON against Younger.  
*Cordelia* - - - The SIDDONS and Mrs. Mattocks!!'

The great talents played to about half the nightly charges, and the house of their surprising rivals literally overflowed.

The discovery of genius sometimes seems almost as miraculous as the possession of it.

Mr. Younger had much of the indiscretion which attaches to his profession, and one in addition, which seldom applies to the professors of the stage. He had wealthy relations, and formed expectations which were disappointed. He died considerably indebted; to the elder Colman 1200*l.*; to Garton, the treasurer of Covent Garden, as much as 5000*l.* The latter took security; a mortgage upon the Liverpool and Manchester theatres.

I confess myself half tempted to omit the mention of one of those atrocious violations of good

taste and decency, the change of sexes altogether, in the performance of the Beggar's Opera, which was perpetrated on the 26th of August, for the benefit of the elder Bannister. Mrs. Wells was the Macheath; Mrs. Lefevre, Peachum; Mrs. Webb, Lockit; Mat o'the Mint, Miss Morris (afterwards Mrs. Colman); Ben Budge, Mrs. Inchbald! Old gigantic Bannister himself was the Polly; Edwin, Lucy.

The enormous absurdity of such a cast was the *humour* of the performance. Bannister, though he sang the airs of Polly chiefly in falsetto, spoke occasionally in the voice of Grimbald; and the feminine refinements of mamma and papa, from such an organ, exceeded all power of face. Edwin, who was an accomplished singer, kept the *music* of Lucy from violation; and he did not encroach much upon the measure of vulgar violence, tolerated from even women of character, in this lover of strong cordials. Mrs. Webb in Lockit, was infinitely too true for burlesque; she looked as if she had never been out of either breeches or Newgate. My late friend, Major Topham, was, at this time, at the *top* of his bent of admiration of Mrs. Wells, and the journals teemed with his praises of her Macheath, which he pronounced, seriously, to be, by many degrees, the best that had ever been seen.

I consider this opera to have been the first of a series of systematic attacks, the object of which was

the degradation of the higher orders, by attributing to them the vices of the lower. It would be obvious to any sound thinker upon such a subject, that, if you can destroy the traditional and voluntary, or involuntary, RESPECT paid to rank and station, those distinctions themselves may be speedily swept away. If you show, that they have the vices, without any of the necessities which conduct to them in lower conditions, you, in fact, elevate morally the low above the high. If you insinuate, in addition, that the punishment of such vices only attends their vulgar practice, you dethrone the majesty of justice itself, and preach open hatred and war against a system, which is terrible only to the poor, and lends itself to protect or palliate the crimes of the great and the wealthy.

## CHAP. IX.

WINTER SEASON OF 1784-5.—RETURN OF MR. KING TO DRURY LANE THEATRE.—SHERIDAN.—MR. KEMBLE AND THE AUTHOR IN HIS LIBRARY.—UNREAD PLAYS.—SHERIDAN'S HABITS.—MR. KING AND HIS ADDRESS.—FELT THE PUBLIC PULSE AS TO MRS. SIDDONS.—DIGGES AND BRERETON.—FIRST APPEARANCE FOR THE SEASON OF MRS. SIDDONS.—ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE.—HER TRIUMPH.—THE TRUE QUESTION CONSIDERED.—PROVINCIAL EXCURSIONS.—VIEWS OF THE PROFESSION.—FORMER TIMES.—COVENT GARDEN.—HOLMAN.—FAWCETT AND MORTON.—MACKLIN ADMIRES HOLMAN.—DIGNUM.—HIS FIRST APPEARANCE.—MRS. SIDDONS IN THE CARMELITE.—CUMBERLAND'S STRANGE EPILOGUE.—ARTHUR AND EMMELINE.—MRS. WELLS'S IMITATION OF THE TWO GREAT TRAGIC ACTRESSES.—DR. JOHNSON'S DEATH.—HIS FUNERAL.—BEAUMARCHAIS' FIGARO.—THAT AUTHOR'S IMPUDENCE.—CUMBERLAND'S NATURAL SON.

THE winter season of 1784-5 opened with one favourable circumstance, the return of Mr. King to Drury Lane Theatre. He accepted the management of the stage, disclaiming, however, very particularly, the having any power whatever as to the acceptance or rejection of the usual literary offerings to the theatre. This department was principally assumed by Mr. Sheridan himself, who

had neither leisure nor inclination to attend to it. Melancholy proofs of this appeared in piles of long forgotten tragedies and comedies, which he had promised to consider, and had never opened. Mr. Kemble, whom I one day found sitting very patiently in this great man's library, pointed to this *funeral* pile, and added to his action the declaration of his belief, that in these morning attendances, he had read more of these productions than ever had been or would be read by the proprietor himself.

Sheridan's habit was to keep his visitors distributed variously, according to their rank or intimacy with him. Some, like ourselves, penetrated into the library; others tired the chairs in the parlours; and the tradesmen lost their time in the hall, the butler's room, and other scenical divisions of the premises. A door opening above stairs, moved all the hopes below: but when he came down his hair was drest for the day; and his countenance for the occasion; and so cordial were his manners, his glance so masterly, and his address so captivating, that the people, for the most part, seemed to forget what they actually wanted, and went away, as if they had come only to look at him. This is, in truth, here written by anticipation; at this time, I had not the honour to be known to Mr. Sheridan. To return, therefore, to the great comedian, King.

It was on the 30th of September, that, after a

retirement of two years, he resumed his professional labours in his favourite part, Lord Ogleby. He wrote and spoke an address, which, I believe, threw a comic mask over a real necessity. However this might be, the public were gainers by the event, for his powers were undiminished, and then, and since then, unequalled. His address contained an allusion to his late friend, Garrick, and one to the splendid talents\* of Mrs. Siddons. By the latter he might be supposed to feel the public pulse; for that great actress was shortly to appear, and the attacks made upon her in the newspapers had excited universal attention to her private character, or rather her *personal* conduct in the profession. The charges of most moment against her were, that she had at first refused to play for Mr. Digges's benefit, but had at length taken £50, and played for him. As to Brereton, she had disappointed his expectations altogether, and refused to perform on any consideration.

As Mrs. Siddons was to act on the 5th of October, and it was quite certain that attempts would be made to annoy her, Mr. Siddons on the

\* This appears to have been what Mr. King meant; but it is dangerous to use ambiguous phrase in an allusion. His words were, "living WORTH;" and this was a term which there were many disposed to deny to be a just one, when applied to the lady in question. About her powers as an actress the dispute could only be, whether she indeed surpassed all others?



30th of September sent the following letter to the editors of the daily papers.

“ SIR,

“ I AM unused to write for public inspection, but I will not hesitate to state the truth; and I think the generous and candid will excuse the rest. I therefore declare that Mrs. Siddons never wished, asked, nor accepted a single farthing from Mr. Digges; and that, a few days after his benefit, that gentleman acknowledged his obligations to her by a very polite note, which Mrs. Siddons (not expecting so malignant an attack) destroyed.

“ With regard to Mr. Brereton, so far from refusing to perform for him, she agreed to do it for a much smaller sum than she was to receive from any other comedian, though every performer for whom she played gave her considerably less than the manager paid her nightly for twenty nights together; but just as the benefits were commencing, she was taken ill, and confined to her bed nearly a fortnight. When she recovered, her strength would not permit her to perform, *immediately*, MORE THAN THREE NIGHTS A WEEK; and as the manager expected his engagement fulfilled, and was to leave Dublin at a particular time, she was obliged to forego the performing for Mr. Brereton; she, after that, made another attempt

to serve him; why it failed, Mr. Brereton can truly tell; but I will be bold to assert, without affording the smallest ground for any charge against Mrs. Siddons. These are solemn facts, on which I leave the public to judge. Animadversions on her public performance, and the questioning of her professional talents, I shall ever submit to; feeling that those, who so liberally reward her exertions, have the best right to judge of their degree of merit, and to praise or censure them, as they think proper; but all attacks upon her private conduct, that, if unnoticed, would deservedly lower her in the estimation of the public, and render her less worthy of their favour and kindness, I hold myself bound to answer.

“ W. SIDDONS.

“ *Thursday, Sept. 30.*”

I remember there were many objections at the time to this letter. There were persons who thought that it would have been better to meet the question on the principle at once; and to have asserted, that there could be no obligation on the part of Mrs. Siddons to play for the benefit of any performer, paid or unpaid; they thought, too, that the petty huckstering of a *smaller* sum from Brereton than others, was injustice towards them, and must be trifling as to him; that “the *other* attempt to serve him” was quite unintelligible, as Mr. Siddons put it, and Brereton’s subsequent

letter did not make it clear. A few might, indeed, bestow a little attention upon the state of the actress herself, whose strength was so mercilessly tasked for money; and of whom we learn, that, after being confined to her bed nearly a fortnight, as she gained strength, she was *ONLY, immediately, able to act* THREE TIMES a WEEK, as a summer relaxation, such parts as Belvidera and Isabella. What her more confirmed health might allow, is left to imagination, and the number of acting nights in a week.

But\*of all the wretched things that were ever drawn reluctantly from a man, the letter of Brereton himself was the coldest and most unsatisfactory; it was addressed to Mr. Siddons, and should be preserved.

“ SIR,

“ I AM concerned to find Mrs. Siddons has suffered in the public opinion on my account. I HAVE TOLD YOU BEFORE, and I again repeat it, that, to the friends I have seen, I have taken pains to exculpate her from the least unkindness to me in Dublin. I acknowledge, she *did* agree to perform at my benefit, for a less sum than for any other performer, but her illness prevented it; and that she *would* have played for me after *that*, had not the night been appointed after she had played three times in the same week, and *that* the week after her illness; and I am very willing you

shall publish this letter, if you think it will be of the least service to Mrs. Siddons, to whom I am proud to own many obligations of friendship.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your very humble servant,

“ W. BRERETON.

“ *Sunday, October 3, 1784.*”

Cold comfort as this trash held out, it was eagerly accepted by Mr. Siddons, whose melancholy notice of one epistle, and hint for another, were thus expressed :

“ Mr. Siddons cannot withhold his public thanks from Mr. Brereton, for his obliging letter, and he has no doubt but Mr. Digges will, in a little time, furnish Mrs. Siddons with another written testimony, that will entirely confound the artful schemes of her detractors.”

On the Monday, the letter and the thanks appeared in the newspapers. The public was certainly not inclined to think the second merited by the first. On the Tuesday, Brereton went again to work, and produced the following letter to the printers or editors of the daily papers :

“ SIR,

“ HAVING been informed that the letter signed by me in the several morning papers of

yesterday, respecting Mrs. Siddons's conduct to me while in Ireland, has not been so clearly understood, as it was both the intention on my part, and justice to her that it should, I think it necessary again to repeat, that it was in no respect owing to Mrs. Siddons that I had no benefit in Ireland; but, *on the contrary*, that in the course of a long and dangerous illness, I received proofs of friendship from her, which I shall ever recollect with gratitude, and avow now with sincere satisfaction.

“ W. BRERETON.

“ *October 5. 1784.*”

To expect that there should be any coherence in such effusions, would indeed be idle. But it might reasonably be demanded, who was at all likely to *start* the question of his benefit, but the man *himself*? And it surely became all this GRATITUDE, to have *anticipated* the storm that fell upon his friendly patroness, and not to have waited until she had met its fury, and vindicated herself. But so it was; and on the day after, this miracle of bad construction, bad grammar, and bad logic, made its appearance. But I must now look to the theatre, for the display of what is called the feeling of the PUBLIC, and the very unusual display of the noble woman's own firmness, sense, and dignity.

On the 5th of October, she made her first appearance that season, in Mrs. Beverly; she perhaps chose that character, because it allowed her the support of her brother, Mr. Kemble. When the curtain rose they advanced together, and were received with the usual unmeaning clamour and contempt. Finding that *then* nothing could be done, Kemble led her off the stage, and left the very crowded audience to consider, whether they would destroy their own pleasure for the mere rumours of transactions, with which, if true, they had no sort of concern. Symptoms of better temper appearing at length, Mrs. Siddons came on the stage by herself, and advancing to the front, with inimitable grace, thus addressed the audience:

“ LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

“ THE kind and flattering partiality, which I have uniformly experienced in this place, would make the present interruption distressing to me indeed, were I in the slightest degree conscious of having deserved your censure. I feel no such consciousness. The stories which have been circulated against me are calumnies. When they shall be proved to be true, my aspersers will be justified; but till then my respect for the public leads me to be confident, that I shall be protected from unmerited insult.”

“That strain I heard was of a higher mood.” It convinced every one who was worthy to hear it, that she, who could delight the public, claimed to be respected by it. Here was no truckling to an unthinking rabble ; but a noble nature demanding protection from undeserved attack. Though she supported herself before the audience with great firmness, and delivered her address with infinite skill, and the finest expression of countenance, yet, when she retired, the highly raised spirits subsided, and left her almost fainting with the exertion. The nerves alone betrayed the woman. Mr. King came forward, and requested a few minutes indulgence for Mrs. Siddons, who would then endeavour to obey their commands. She was soon sufficiently composed to throw her whole mind into the character of Mrs. Beverly, and perhaps never produced greater effect. The audience was particularly brilliant and numerous.

I should add to the above, that Digges directed his son to write the letter so much expected ; it stated, “that he had paid to Mrs. Siddons no “money whatever, and had written a letter “expressing his obligation to her ; that as he “understood it had been mislaid, he with great “pleasure repeated his acknowledgments.” The ill-will manifested on the present occasion was not completely banished the theatre, and for many nights a sharp and angry salutation attended the

appearance of Mrs. Siddons, which was immediately overborne by the applause of the more polite and judicious part of the audience.

Hitherto all things had proceeded, as to Mrs. Siddons and her brother, in the usual course ; they had neither expected nor found any royal road to distinction. Through a course of severe application and provincial engagements, their talents had ripened into perfection ; they had been welcomed in the metropolis, and their fame and fortune seemed to be established upon a durable basis. But they who ascend displace others, and it is difficult to submit to even the superiority of a rival. The excellence that could not be denied was therefore discreetly admitted. But the malice that could not lower the professional merits, nor dispute the propriety of its rewards, availed itself from time to time of the gentle insinuations, that it was a great pity so much excellence should be unaccompanied by the most amiable feelings of our nature ; and that a liberal bounty towards others might be demanded from those who had benefited so highly by the public generosity.

In the course of her engagements in the country, Mrs. Siddons, as we have seen, had been solicited to act for the benefit of certain performers. Whether with or without payment, is a matter of only pecuniary moment. The question, as it appears to me, was not whether Mrs. Siddons should or should not lend her aid to make the success of



those, who would be neglected but for her attraction, but how far such a claim might be expected to extend? It might be said, as a ground of declining such assistance, — “ You, Sir, have a high rank in the profession; you have a fixed and handsome income; why should you derive a large accession to it from the mere anxiety of the public to see ME? If, moreover, my efforts can be extended beyond the rights of my own family, without injury to my health, the claim upon me ought to come rather from the necessitous than the affluent: — they surely are first entitled to my aid, whom it may relieve from embarrassment, and even want.”

Indeed, in the country engagements, which had been the consequences of the public avidity to see her, much harm had necessarily resulted to the profession. The manager, by securing a present advantage, had, in fact, injured his permanent interest. The transcendant talent which he had secured, under the pretext of his anxiety to gratify the public, changed altogether the kind of attraction. Instead of relying upon the quiet exertions of a company of respectable actors, he had taught his patrons to despise such common gratifications: they now reserved themselves for the *starry* nights of the season. From that time to this the practice has proceeded, and the manager has to calculate how many grand nights he can procure by a succession of the great performers from London, to make up for the beggarly account of his ordinary

receipts. But, as this mischief arose from the London stages, so it returns fearfully upon them. The actor, finding that his fame secures him great advantages in the country, looks with a very different eye upon a town engagement. When first brought out in a provincial theatre, the ultimate hope is a settled engagement in London, that bestows a high degree of respectability in the art, and a competent or affluent income. But afterwards, when the considerations of prudence press, when it is remembered that health is uncertain and the public fickle, the actor will think only of accumulating a fortune that may defy the chances of life, and enable him to retire from the profession, while yet young, rather than be compelled to burthen it when old. He, therefore, learns to dislike engagements that bind him to one spot during so many months of the year, and prefers those for a limited number of nights. The town manager catches at this, as a means of enabling him to vary his attractions, and relieve himself from a weight of dead salary for performers not constantly used. The public here, like that of the provinces, crowd the nights of these stars, as they are called, and neglect the others. But a great injury is done to the art itself. Instead of the smoothness that results from the habit of acting together for a series of years, all is crude and raw in the performance. The hero of the night looks upon the stage as exclusively his own: he settles

how the business must be done; decides how much strength shall be left in the other characters; and there is soon no management in the theatre, no union in the company. If novelties are brought out, they cannot be continued by the strength that established them, because the performer, male or female, may have 20*l.* per night; and to run a piece, so cast, might give a salary of 120*l.* a week.

Before these outrageous demands were made for public gratification, plays were admirably acted by a regular and nearly unchangeable company. Theatres, too, were profitable concerns, and interested nearly alike all the ranks of society. Men of the highest powers enjoyed and took pride in the drama of their country. The Pit displayed its prescriptive rows of critics, at the head of whom sat Charles Macklin; while the boxes frequently exhibited, along with the beauty of higher life, the glory of our senate, Pitt, Fox, Burke, Lord Loughborough, and a long train of imitators; and it became an article of attraction in our newspapers, to state, the following day, the names of those who the preceding night had honoured the theatre with their presence. At the same time, the high rank of the frequenters begat a demand for a very careful dress, and polite and accommodating manners, in such as approached them. We had then no such horrors as bears in their own skins, with a dozen capes, like coachmen, standing up in the side boxes with their hats on, insensible of the

demands of respect towards the gentler sex ; and ready, and even anxious, to crown their insolence, by a boxing match in the lobby. These reflections I have rapidly committed to paper as they occurred to me ; less solicitous to throw them into exact method, than to leave them to a calm consideration. They are deeply interesting to an art which I love ; and that art has always been deemed of the highest importance to the mind and manners of a country.

On the 6th of October, Mrs. Abington resumed her engagement at Covent Garden, in her favourite character, Maria in the *Hypocrite*. She was fashionably attended always ; and the play was twice repeated in the course of the month.

But on the 23d, Mr. Harris brought out a young gentleman in *Romeo*, from whom much was expected, and from whom much was derived, though not precisely of the kind which his early promise had held out. I allude to the late Mr. Holman, who unquestionably was highly gifted for the profession. His person was genteel, and his manners extremely prepossessing. His face originally was not only handsome, but expressive ; and he had a manly sonorous voice, which, though it had more strength than sweetness, yet discovered no signs of being rebellious to the ear ; and as the actor had the character of being a man of study,

of judgment and good taste, as he showed high spirit and great ardour to excel, there were very sanguine hopes that he would leave a name in the art of great if not first-rate celebrity.

Mr. Holman was born in August, 1764, in the metropolis, and received his education at Soho School, under Barwis. Morton, his very steady friend through life, was his schoolfellow. A peculiar feature of Soho at that time, was the relaxation it permitted of acting *English* tragedy and comedy. Holman was certainly the hero of the company. There are still living some persons who saw and admired there his Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Richard III., Prince Hal, and the accomplished Benedick in "Much ado about No-thing."

Mr. Barwis's view in not merely permitting, but urging and correcting such performances, was confessedly to give the pupils a free and unembarrassed manner, and an accurate and powerful elocution, which he concluded to be essential to the display of the sound erudition which occupied their studies. I am not able to state whether the church, or the bar, or the senate, have derived any accession of graceful oratory from the plan; it, I confess, seemed to me, if I may parody the poet, —

Stage-born, and destin'd to the *stage* again.

Two of the school, have certainly *trod* the stage

with great distinction, Holman and Fawcett; and Morton is likely to occupy it as an author, at least as long as any one of his contemporaries. A friendship of thirty years may be supposed to imply some partiality, but, I think, I merely echo here the opinion of the public. His passion for a country life may a little narrow the range of his observation; but he seizes character with great truth and acuteness, and is a most powerful master of the feelings. As a dramatist, he is peculiarly skilful in structure: he binds his matter better together than is usual on the modern stage, of which he has been one of the ablest and most strenuous supporters.

But to return to his friend Holman. That was observable in *his* Romeo, which has constantly attended all the Romeos of my time; namely, he had more of every thing than tenderness. "One touch of nature makes the whole (theatric) world kin," they are all for "Ercles' vein;" and the daily critic invariably passes for praise to the scene with the friar, in the third act. Miss Younge was his Juliet, and she conceived and expressed the early passion of the girl with her peculiar enthusiasm: but the person could not sustain the illusion; her step, though gliding, was yet that of maturity, and though her playfulness of manner by no means offended, yet it could not charm. In her scenes of vehemence, she triumphed over time, and in-

terested beyond the rivalry of even youthful beauty.

Holman would have preferred Macbeth or Richard as his trial part, but he yielded to the advice of Mr. Harris, who thought, that in stamping a first impression, you may as well render the youthful figure available, when it is a fine one; there is less difficulty in assuming old age when we are young, than the stages of life, which are less remote. This was fully verified when he shortly after did play Macbeth, on the 12th of November. His slim juvenile form, his ardent mind, his hurried step, were all uncharacteristic of Macbeth. He had been entered of Queen's College, Oxford, and intended for the church; had the reputation of Greek literature, and some opinion, therefore, attached to his judgment. I know not how classical studies may prepare for the actor's art, but Henderson, one of the most learned in his profession, and the most subtle of readers, had not even the advantages of a great public school in the forming of his mind.

One advantage the actor may certainly derive from academic studies; he will learn to value himself, and prefer through life the associations of his youth. His habits will therefore rarely be low, and his conduct will for the most part support the dignity of the scholar and the gentleman. An actor who feels a pride that Oxford was a mother

to him, will usually take care that she do not blush for her son.

Macklin praised him for the *nature* he displayed in his performance of Macbeth ; but I found the Nestor of the stage sufficiently flexible in his opinions. He had made his peace with the manager, and was therefore then disposed to forward the objects of Mr. Harris, who took up Holman with great warmth. One topic of his commendation was suited to the meridian of vulgar criticism. " I like the young fellow, Sir ; he introduces no " NEW READINGS in the part." Macklin could not but know, that this, if it had been true, would have been equivalent to a declaration, that he did not THINK for himself ; for any original thinker must materially differ from others. Genius is always peculiar. There was but one man upon the stage who troubled them with any thing of the sort, and that was Kemble. The only question should have been, are they RIGHT readings ? If they be, no matter by what great men they may have been missed. The truth is, that indolent self-sufficiency receives all new discovery as a personal insult. Kemble, more or less, was treated in this way through life. He despised both the folly of it and the malignity, and continued in his course.

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A person like the present writer, long familiar with the stage, is often very strangely affected in



his common walks for exercise or amusement. I this very day met, in his dining costume of black coat and white waistcoat, but walking rather uneasily to himself, Charles Dignum; whom I am here to record as having made his first appearance in London, at Drury Lane Theatre, in the character of Young Meadows, on the 14th of October, 1784, nearly thirty-nine years ago. He was a pupil of Linley's, and preserved the very sweet and simple style taught him by his master, without the smallest ambition for the more florid and ornamented manner introduced from the Italian school.

Mrs. Siddons was now driven, from the desire to vary her attractions, to characters greatly inferior to those in which she had so frequently appeared. Margaret of Anjou and Zara, could add but slenderly to her fame. She, however, added greatly to the fame of Cumberland, by performing the Countess of St. Valori, in his tragedy of the Carmelite. In character, the Countess somewhat resembled Lady Randolph: she had mourned for twenty years a lost husband. It appears that St. Valori, recovering from the wounds he received from the assassin Hildebrand, had been carried into captivity. His son, Montgomery, brought up as a peasant, and then received as a page by his own mother, at length attaining manhood is made the challenger of the Baron Hildebrand, who coming over to answer the challenge, is shipwrecked on the Isle of Wight, and saved by his antagonist.

Disguised as a Carmelite, he brings over unconsciously in his train St. Valori himself, who entertains a jealousy at the favour which Montgomery enjoys at the castle. Cumberland but works out the hint of such indecent passion given by Home in Douglas. On these occasions, the relative ages of the parties is always judiciously forgotten; and the invariable return made for twenty years of exemplary piety and fidelity, is always a jealousy in the husband, refuted by character, disparity, and probability; and for which no ground can possibly exist, out of the most impure and frantic imagination.

The scenes of Mrs. Siddons and Kemble were very finely acted: the play ended happily, and did as much as, perhaps, can be expected from modern tragedy: the effect, altogether solemn and strange, was not unlike that produced by modern Gothic; it forcibly reminded you of that ancient and mysterious excellence, which it could but imperfectly imitate. Agreeably to the custom, to see the lady the epilogue, Mr. Cumberland sent on Mrs. Siddons with a most lame and impotent conclusion indeed. After talking of the Greek tragedians, who painted women, one *as they ought to be*, the other *as they are*,—and, begging pardon for bringing his name so near those of an immortal fame, — and all the time as totally forgetting Shakespeare, as if HE had no pretensions to paint the *female* character, he makes his majestic heroine

utter the following nonsense to the brilliant circle around her : —

“ If you have faults, alas ! he bids me say,  
 O that his wish could charm them all away !  
 For if no cure but caustics can be found,  
 He will not make a sore to heal a wound ;  
 If you have faults, thy're faults he won't discover ;  
 To your own sex he begs to bind you over.  
 So many ladies now there are who write,  
 You'll hear of all your trips some winter's night :  
 Since Pegasus has learn'd the jadish trick  
 To bear a side-saddle, *you'll find him KICK.*”

After which delicate admonition, this beautiful and interesting woman had to recover her dignity and testify her respect, and bow herself off the stage.

On the 16th November, O'Keefe brought out at Covent Garden his very diverting opera of *Fontainebleau, or Our Way in France*. It is even yet occasionally acted, and was extremely productive to the theatre.

At Drury Lane a great deal of pains had been taken with a masque, called *Arthur and Emmeline*, an alteration of Dryden's *King Arthur*, or the *British Worthy*. Miss Farren was the heroine, and her innocent blindness interested in a very high degree. Kemble sustained Arthur in a most chivalrous style, and the Grimbald and Philidel of Bannister and Miss Field (not to speak it profanely) formed no despicable stage companion to the

magic of the *Tempest*. Linley made some tasteful additions to the divine music of Purcell. The alliance between that great composer and Dryden, is thus celebrated by the poet in his beautiful dedication of the piece to the Marquis of Halifax :

“ There is nothing better than what I intended,  
“ but the music, which has since arrived to a  
“ greater perfection in England than ever formerly ; especially passing through the artful  
“ hands of Mr. Purcell, who has composed it with  
“ so great a genius, that he has nothing to fear  
“ but an ignorant, ill-judging audience.. But the  
“ numbers of poetry and vocal music are sometimes so contrary, that in many places I have  
“ been obliged to cramp my verses, and make  
“ them rugged to the reader, that they may be  
“ harmonious to the hearer ; of which I have no  
“ reason to repent me, because these sorts of entertainments are principally designed for the ear  
“ and eye ; and therefore, in reason, my art on  
“ this occasion, ought to be subservient to his.”

Mrs. Crawford resumed her original part of the *Grecian Daughter*, on the 29th of November ; and on the 13th of the following month, supported Holman's *Achmet*, by performing *Zaphira*, in *Barbarossa*. But this season made it clear, that this lady could no longer maintain a competition with her younger rival. The exigencies of management appeared to me to have too sedulously prolonged the contest. Enough still remained to

show how formidable she would have been, could she have preserved the entire powers that once captivated Barry.

That surprising mimic, Mrs. Wells, used to give a scene of the two great actresses in Shore and Alicia. Of Mrs. Siddons, she gave all that *could* be imitated; and the truth and almost identity, with which she spoke, as Mrs. Crawford, "What "whining wretch art thou?" though not in the least caricatured, yet told the ear that harmony was not a little invaded by the harshness of the utterance.

Holman had interposed Don Felix, in the Wonder, between his tragic performances, and there seemed to have been too great hurry, in forcing him into various characters, for which he could have only juvenile preparation.

The historian of the stage is called upon to notice, particularly, the death of any of its ornaments. Dr. Johnson expired at seven o'clock on the evening of the 13th of December, 1784. His having contributed to form so fine a genius as Mr. Garrick; his tragedy of Irene; his matchless prologue upon the opening of Drury Lane Theatre, in 1747; his edition of Shakspeare; all connect him powerfully with my present subject. He had, in addition, received Mrs. Siddons with admiration, and complimented her with elegant neatness; he conversed freely and cordially with Kemble; and though in a great measure disqualified for the full

enjoyment of a theatre, yet the actors were always proud of his presence among them ; and his appearance in a side-box, was by the audience deemed equivalent to the appearance of Cato among the Romans. His friends, Dr. Goldsmith, Colman, and Murphy, I believe, were usually complimented by his attendance on the first night's performance of their plays.

It has been said, that he had no great opinion of the power of the stage to enforce the conceptions of the dramatic poet ; and it is probable, that he never heard the famous soliloquies of Hamlet or Cato so well declaimed from the stage, as they were given by his own impressive mode of recitation ; but Dr. Johnson could not really undervalue scenical exhibition ; the many are still taught by the actor, and even the learned, for the greater part, have something to acquire from the skilful tragedian. If Johnson could say to Garrick, during an interval even of his *Lear*, " Punch has no feelings," Mr. Burke, before the assembled senate of the country, alluded to him as their master in elocution, and the house had nearly voted him the sole exception to a standing order.

Dr. Johnson's life has been written in a very able manner by Sir John Hawkins and by Mr. Murphy, both of them honoured with his peculiar intimacy, and upon full knowledge. In addition to which, Mr. Boswell, with a zeal which has never been equalled, and ability never at any time surpassed,

has enabled every future age to possess the colloquial wisdom and wit of that amazing man. In this allusion to his work, I was about to call him the *late* Mr. Boswell; but that epithet, alas! is appropriated to my young friend, his son; who, with the characteristic perseverance and affection of his name, but just delivered Mr. Malone's improved edition of Shakspeare to the world, and was then hurried prematurely to the grave. What difficulties he had in that laborious work, I know; but his temper disarmed even controversy of its asperities, and he will merit and receive nothing but praise, from the manner in which he discharged the trust devolved upon him.

The biographers of Dr. Johnson have left me nothing to add but the names of those distinguished friends, who, on the 20th December, followed his remains to the poetic division of Westminster Abbey,

"Where Shakspeare's image, from it's hallow'd base,

"Seem'd to prescribe a grave, and point the place."

His *executors*, Sir John Hawkins, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Dr. Wm. Scott.

His *pall-bearers*, Sir Charles Bunbury, Sir Joseph Banks, Edmund Burke, William Windham, Bennet Langton, and George Colman, Esquires.

The Reverend Dr. Horsley and Dr. Farmer, General Paoli, Dr. Brocklesby, Dr. Burney, the Rev. Mr. Strahan, Mr. Seward, Mr. Ryland,

Mr. Cruikshank, Mr. Hoole, Mr. Nichols, Mr. Sastres, Mr. Dumoulin, with many others, as mourners.

His friend, thè Rev. Dr. Taylor, performed the burial office, attended by *some* gentlemen of the Abbey. The Cathedral Service was withheld from this most determined defender of the church, I am willing to hope, upon some indispensable rule; but I fear the money was *taken* for the ground, when it might have been honourably refused.

It has so happened that I have to commemorate the death of the moral *sage*, and the triumph of a gay and profligate author, on the same week in this great city. But so it is, as Johnson has himself told us, "the reveller is hastening to his revels, while the mourner is burying his friend."

Mr. Holcroft brought out on the 14th of December, his translation of Caron de Beaumarchais' comedy, *La folle Journée, ou le Mariage de Figaro*. Perhaps, even at this distance of time, the follies of a day may justify a rather detailed consideration. In Paris this play was pronounced by the king utterly unfit for representation. But upon its great success at Versailles, an attempt was made to bring it out secretly in the capital, which was interdicted by an express order from the king, on the very day of its intended performance. It was, I think, one of the errors of the old French government, that the power of the sovereign was too generally, and even frivolously, called into ac-



tion. He was mixed up with every thing, and thus rendered obnoxious by a continual opposition to what were made to become the wishes of the people.

Beaumarchais was a man of the genuine French character, bold and yet supple, intriguing and persevering. He allowed M. Gaillard, a member of the Academy, to make some slight alterations, and it was then acted at the house of the Comte de Vaudreuil. But at length he had among the profligates of Paris, sufficient interest to get the prohibition of the sovereign himself withdrawn, and his play was exhibited with unprecedented success at the theatre Français on the 27th April. A most enlightened critic of that day has left us his account of its reception, which I shall use in the succinct narrative I am writing. So great was the eagerness for this forbidden fruit, that the desire of distinction itself gave way, and females of all ranks were contented to enjoy their amusement side by side. However the sober part of society might declaim against the libertinism of the play, one thing could not be denied on its performance, that it was a too faithful mirror of the vices and irregularities of fashionable life. It was even said, that the boldness and fidelity of his picture were absolutely essential to the correction of the mischief. But a very little attention to his play made it too apparent that moral amendment never could for a moment have been the object of the writer. The characters

wore their frailties much too unblushingly to strike the conscious spectator with any thing like shame ; it produced rather an open enjoyment of indiscretions, that, if they had been practised in private life, had been decently covered from general observation. Figaro is a dauntless and intriguing servant. Almaviva, tired of his wife, is represented as seducing her attendant, and also pursuing the daughter of his gardener. We have a page too in this erotic assembly, beautiful as love himself, passionately enamoured of the Countess, but also inflamed at the sight of every other handsome woman. And the Countess herself, susceptible far beyond the distinct avowal of any female of decent manners, indulging her feelings in a sport, that, however begun, usually terminates in earnest. Here is only the miserable choice between the absolutely corrupt and those on the very verge of becoming so. If such was the range of the author in sketching the tender passion, he took a still wider in lashing all the authorities of the state, and all the leading characters and institutions to which he had ever found himself obnoxious. Circumstances conspired to elevate this graceful Belial upon the altar of fashion — the whole nation became his worshippers, and Figaro was a new religion. How it was acted in Paris, I cannot be expected to tell. Even the divine genius of Mozart has been exerted to consecrate the drama of Beau-

marchais, and the *Follies of a Day* have been rendered *eternal*.

Dr. Johnson has said that, "where there is shame, there may in time be virtue." Beaumarchais, as far as he had power, compelled all who had the desire to see his drama, to exhibit publicly their weakness or their vice. The impudence of what follows will not easily be paralleled. He circulated a story that the Duke de Villeguier had asked him for a private box, that certain ladies might, unseen, be present at his Figaro. In the true spirit of Rousseau's preface to the *Nouvelle Heloise*, he thus replies to him.

" I have no consideration, M. le Duc, for ladies  
" who allow themselves to see a spectacle, which  
" they deem indecent, provided they can see it in  
" secret. I can never lend myself to such whims-  
" sies. I have given my play to the public to  
" amuse, not to instruct it; and certainly not to  
" afford the affectedly decent an opportunity of  
" secretly enjoying and publicly condemning it.  
" But the prudery of the present age would con-  
" ciliate the pleasures of vice with the honours of  
" virtue. My piece is no equivocal production.  
" It must be adopted or fled. I salute you, M.  
" le Duc, and shall keep my box."

In the circulation of this impertinence, sometimes the Duc d'Aumont was said to be the peer, to whom it was addressed. But he was compelled to

contradict the report, and avow that it was in fact written to his friend M. du Paty, president of the Parliament of Bordeaux, who had requested the box for a *lady and her daughters*! The nobility, having cleared themselves from the charge, were contented to enjoy the laugh, where the author had directed it; and thought more of their order, than the morals of the nation.

Beaumarchais, by the time that his play attained its fiftieth night, had made 36,000 livres (1500*l.* sterling) by his profits as author, with a still progressive interest on the stage. He had not yet printed it, in order the stronger to attach the public to the representation. But he announced his intention to compose a preface, in which his production should be proved to be the most decent comedy on the stage, and at the same time highly favourable to public morals. Here however his great master of Geneva finessed beyond him, for with relation to his Julie, he thus expresses himself in his preface: “*J’ai vules mœurs de mon tems, et j’ai publié ces lettres. Que n’ai je vécu dans un siecle où je dusse les jeter au feu!*”

“ They pleas’d their times, and did not wish to mend.”

I have never been at the trouble to examine the extent of Mr. Holcroft’s dealings with the *Follies of a Day*. He should have been kept from a personal folly on the first night, to which the grossest vanity must have conducted him: he actually per-

formed Figaro himself. Those who remember the person, the countenance, the gait of Mr. Holcroft, will confess the absolute necessity which existed for turning over the part to Charles Bonner; who was a sprightly actor, with a very bright and sparkling expression of face, and a neat and well compacted person of the middle size. Mr. Bonner was a man of talent, and, as I know, sustained for Palmer the laborious task of digesting and maturing the mail coach plan; one of the happiest combinations that ever facilitated the commercial intercourse of a great people. The Follies of a Day were too mercurial for the dull English. The charm was not translated; it remained in Paris. The ghost of French wit only walked six *successive* nights among us.

Mr. Cumberland had now got possession of Drury Lane, and was contented to pocket the unredeemable affront of Sir Fretful. His Carmelite had shown the best specimens of his tragic style, but the Natural Son never approached the comic dialogue of the West Indian. This comedy appeared at Drury Lane Theatre on the 22d of December. There is ample evidence in his Observer, that Mr. Cumberland was one of the ablest dramatic critics of our country. He analyses a comedy, ancient or modern, with the happiest skill, and feels every resort of interest developed in the progress of the fable. In his own comedy, the whole interest was exposed and exhausted in

the second act, and three additional courses were served up, after every body had dined. It maintained itself the first three nights, and then received the support of the Christmas pantomime.

## CHAP. X.

MR. POPE'S OROONOKO. — MASSINGER'S MAID OF HONOUR. — MRS. SIDDONS IN LADY MACBETH. — SMITH IN MACBETH. — PACKER IN DUNCAN. — GEORGE STEEVENS ATTACKS THE BANQUET SCENE. — THAT PLAY REPEATED BY ROYAL COMMAND. — THE KING'S NOTICE OF HENDERSON'S BENEDICK. — IMPERFECT ONCE IN THIS CHARACTER. — THE ORPHAN. — HOLMAN'S HAMLET. — HENDERSON'S READINGS AT FREEMASON'S HALL. — LE TEXIER IN LISLE STREET. — COMPARED WITH EACH OTHER. — THEATRES RESUMED, OTHELLO. — MR. KEMBLE IN THE MOOR. — HIS SISTER IN DESDEMONA. — DEPRECIATED. — GREAT EXCELLENCE EXEMPLIFIED. — THEY READ TO THEIR MAJESTIES. — MR. KEMBLE FOR HIS BENEFIT ACTS MACBETH. — CRITICAL DISPUTE. — MASON'S ELFRIDA. — MRS. SIDDONS IN THAT PART. — THE ORIGINAL TEMPEST ACTED. — INADVERTENCY OF THE POET. — MRS. SIDDONS ACTS ROSALIND. — MRS. BELLAMY. — HER BENEFIT.

ON the 8th of January, 1785, an actor, who has now been near forty years among us, made his first appearance at Covent Garden Theatre in the character of Oroonoko. I allude to the performance of Mr. Pope. The policy of the manager led him to give to Mr. Holman a rival at starting, as one mode of insuring his utmost efforts, and also

perhaps of moderating his demands. There might too be a feeling, that something more tender than Holman was still the *desideratum* of the stage. The silver tones of Barry yet lingered in the ear, and the voice of Mr. Pope was unquestionably a very fine one. His person too was really very elegant, and his excellence as a painter gave him that knowledge of expression and picturesque effect, which comes very powerfully in aid of the other requisites for the stage.

The opinion originally formed of this actor, I cannot think ever materially varied. There was in his cadence a disposition to throw the voice upward unnecessarily, and this even injured the display of its powerful tone — had he declaimed more upon a level, his organ would have produced a greater effect, and perhaps the meaning would have been better conveyed. There always seemed to be more effort than was absolutely necessary. Perhaps too his ear was not critically accurate. He was, from his outset, a very able performer, and although not what I should style a great and original artist, yet it may be said of him that his talents were highly essential in the composition of a good company; and from his manners and accomplishments he powerfully aided the increasing respectability of the profession. Mr. Pope was invariably, I believe, thought a handsome man, but his countenance never augmented the effect of his pathos; its expression was



either feeble, or seemingly differed from the characteristic of the emotion.

When on the 19th he was completely known by his performance of Jaffier, it was considered that he rather gained than lost by the *colour* of his first character.

Holman had been hurried on to the exhibition of his *Richard III.*, which I well remember. There was energy unfailling, but a want of discrimination. Surely the manager must have leant to youthful effort very decidedly, to think of Holman as a *Richard*, when Henderson was in his theatre. I freely admit, however, that the treasury must be deemed a very competent critic; but writing now with the knowledge that this was the last year of Henderson, and that he was snatched away from us at the early age of forty, one is hurt to think that there should have been a disposition to divest him of any of his honours, and that his exquisite judgment and masterly elocution did not secure for him *all* the leading characters of Shakspeare, both tragic and comic.

At Drury Lane Theatre Mr. Kemble brought out on the 27th, his alteration of Massinger's *Maid of Honour*. It would ask a long dissertation to show the cause of the slender popularity of Massinger. This was by no means a successful revival. Mr. Kemble contented himself with the modest character of Adorni. Mrs. Siddons supported the

Maid of Honour with much grace and sweetness; but she in vain tried to give a comic effect to the epilogue supplied by the elder Colman. The gaiety of Mrs. Siddons did not excite mirth — it was patience smiling at grief — it was the condescension of tragedy. The critics of that day, for once, were unanimous, that it would be better to trust such things to Miss Farren, or Miss Pope.

The maids of honour of the court had distinguished themselves, at this time, by some singular marks of spirit, and Colman played upon the incident, with his usual whim — but Mrs. Siddons probably disappointed the author's expectation, and suffered, unnecessarily, by comparison with the favourite organs of the sportive muse.

In looking to the reasons which probably induced Mr. Kemble to revive the *Maid of Honour*, the principal must have been that of adding to his sister's attractions. Kept down as he was himself, Adorni could do nothing for him. Bertoldo was a fine showy part for Palmer. The play, however, is not built upon flesh and blood — its interests are the fopperies of our old ponderous romances, and its poetical justice to be awarded only by the 'Parliament of Love.' The audience, I remember, was cold to it — to the great bulk of them it must have been utterly unintelligible. Camiola ransoms the object of her affection, on condition that he shall marry her — he listens to the temptation which Aurelia holds out, and, against conviction, would

break from his engagement to Camiola. Upon coming into her presence he is overwhelmed with her reproaches, and sues to be forgiven. Aurelia too releases him from his second engagement. Then, the Maid of Honour, with a nicety peculiar to her character, refuses him absolutely, and devotes herself to religion. The Priest edifies the assembly with the austerities she is about to practise, and leads her off to consummate the sacrifice. Such is the interest.

Camiola was a new character for Mrs. Siddons ; but it was not of the kind demanded by her fame — it was declamatory. Now, certainly among the merits of this transcendant actress, was to be numbered the very finest declamation in the world ; but it was asserted that she was for the most part a declaimer only, and indeed that her brother also was a fine reciter of sonorous versification, but unequal to the irregular bursts of passion, as they are found in the page of the genuine interpreter of nature. It was insinuated that some conviction of this deficiency produced Mrs. Siddons's cautious abstinence from the characters of Shakspeare. But that malice must not be expected to be quite guarded, it might have occurred to these critics that Mrs. Crawford's line of character was precisely that of Mrs. Siddons, and indeed for a very sufficient reason, namely, that the lead taken by the ladies in our public amusements demanded a kind of exhibition of which the excellencies were more

particularly feminine ; that they, as might be expected, delighted to see the charms of their sex become almost the arbiters of destiny, and life and empire the playthings of their power. That Shakspeare had exhibited nothing of this sort in his drama was quite apparent for the reasons assigned by his best critic.\* There might be found an additional cause in the want of female performers in his times. I always think that he would have written more for the women of his dramas, if he had found female representatives. His taste was too pure and natural to be quite satisfied with the barbered chins of his young men, and the false delicacy with which they mimicked the real properties of the other sex. They could but barely be endured ; — whatever may be said, nature forbade them ever to delight. I am aware of Kynaston in

\* Need I say here that I mean Dr. Johnson? But I will at all events leave no doubt, in what view of his labours, I so esteem him. I term him the best critic, because he has best displayed the genius of Shakspeare ; because he has silenced, and for ever, the puny jargon as to the unities, by which his fame was ignorantly assailed. Because, without soaring into a mystic adoration, too flighty to be rational, he has thoroughly estimated his powers and his intentions ; and supplied such a PREFACE to his works, as will, under no changes of fashion, be ever separated from that immortal series.

As the laborious collectors of every thing connected with the poet's history, or that of the stage, I feel grateful to Mr. Malone and Mr. Chalmers. As supplying the ablest illustrations from the writings of his contemporaries, the three great commentators are certainly Dr. Farmer, George Steevens, and Edmond Malone.

a still later age, and his morning rides with women of high rank in Hyde Park. I have just reviewed the *Follies of a Day*, and shall not enquire the motives of these affected gratifications.

It is sufficient, therefore, in looking to the females of Otway, Southerne, Rowe, and Thomson, with those of the French stage, as translated by Phillips and Aaron Hill, and Murphy,—it is sufficient, I say, to view the space they fill, and the interest they excite, to ascertain why they must ever be the choice of the young actress, and her female admirers. A period, however, arrives, when the ardent affection of early life does not quite agree with the stately figure and powerful expression of the mature actress; at such a time Shakespeare opens the region of majesty and power; of ambition, and disdain, and despair, of guilt and terror; and FORCE confirms the triumphant reign, that commenced with the gentler affections. Although, in point of fact, the time of life to which I allude had not yet arrived, and that Mrs. Siddons, as either maid, wife, or daughter, had sufficient personal charms (indeed when had she not?) to require no grains of allowance in the performance of the long line of tender and graceful heroines, it yet was wise to show that she could gain the utmost heights of tragedy, and astonish at least as much as she had delighted. Her benefit, therefore, on the 2nd of February, exhibited this great actress in the crown of all her

achievements, Lady Macbeth. And, certainly, if ever the slanderer of excellence was put to shame, as well as flight, it must have been at this noble exhibition. Language seemed really to sink under her eulogists. It was the triumph of the art; it was at once, simple, grand, and striking; it was such an impersonation as Raffaele might have conceived, had Shakspeare been his contemporary, and which Reynolds had painted, being so fortunate as to be hers. Sir Joshua on that night occupied his privileged seat in the orchestra, and never availed himself of his other privilege, until the tragic queen had quitted the last scene of *sleeping horror*. Then, —

“ He shifted his trumpet, and only took snuff.”

Part of the pit, on this occasion, was laid into the boxes; a practice which can hardly be defended, because an usurpation upon the territory of a most respectable class of admirers. But on such nights, the additional splendour gained by the jewels and feathers of the ladies, made up a *coup d'œil* of the most fascinating description. When I have returned from such exhibitions, it seemed the dispelling of a dream of eastern magnificence. I take the liberty to remark, that there appeared more *soul* in the applause given to these triumphs of Mrs. Siddons, than I have ever felt in the audiences, who were attracted by any succeeding magnet of the drama.

On this occasion, the admirers of Mr. Kemble were compelled to see Smith in the character of Macbeth. That gentleman had attended to none of the hints, gentle or rude, to withdraw from the busy scene. He was criticised rather unmercifully. In the dagger scene, after the bell had given him the invitation to the murder, Smith was too earnest to remember the *stealthy pace*, that he had just prescribed to Macbeth; and though not the stones, yet the stage boards at the wing, "prated rather loudly of his whereabouts." This incident was converted into a very unexpected compliment to poor old Packer, "who merited, it was said, "as Duncan, special praise in the *sleeping* scene. "Any other actor, besides himself, would too "probably have been discomposed, by the noise "made by Macbeth as he ascended."

Nor did our great actress herself escape the malicious pleasantry of George Steevens, upon her fascinating address at the banquet. With his old allusion to the supposed frugality of Gower Street, he wrote the following masterly insinuation in his usual vehicle. To do him but justice, it is so superior to all other composition of the time, that he might as well have signed it. Those who knew, and most people knew the highly convivial character of Smith, must have enjoyed the imputation so gravely cast upon him.

“ THEATRICAL INTELLIGENCE.

“ *The Tragedy of Macbeth.*

“ Such habits as predominate in the real characters of actors and actresses, are apt to peep through their assumed ones. A stronger exemplification of this remark, perhaps, was never seen than in last night’s performance of *Macbeth* at Drury Lane Theatre.

“ Mr. Smith, who, during his college life and since, is known to have been an utter enemy to all convivial meetings, and prodigalities of entertainment, gave his welcome to the nobles of Scotland, with the coldness that might have been expected from one, who was compelled to counterfeit an office, from which, had it been real, his heart would have revolted. The consequence was obvious, not a knife or fork was lifted up at his bidding.

“ The soul of Mrs. Siddons, on the contrary, (Mrs. Siddons, whose dinners and suppers are proverbially numerous) expanded on this occasion. She spoke her joy on beholding so many guests, with an earnestness, little short of rapture, bordering on enthusiasm. Her address appeared so like reality, that all the Thanes about her seized the wooden fowls, &c. in hopes, alas! to find every dish as warm and genuine as her invitation to feed on it.



“ This is no bad opportunity for observing that  
 “ the common weal may suffer too much from the  
 “ frequency and luxury of this lady’s banquets,  
 “ not to have an interest in diminishing their num-  
 “ bers, and simplifying their quality. What would  
 “ become of *oratory*, should Mr. Sheridan the  
 “ elder die of repletion at her table? What a  
 “ mortal blow would the *law* receive, if the facul-  
 “ ties of Mr. Erskine were ’whelmed under a  
 “ mass of her tempting viands? And could the  
 “ art of *painting* have survived the loss of Sir  
 “ Joshua Reynolds, had he died of indigestion, in  
 “ consequence of the profuse supper she lately  
 “ gave him? Let Mrs. Siddons, therefore, be told  
 “ that as often as she throws out these unsalutary  
 “ lures to her friends, she sins inexcuseably  
 “ against the interest of the public. She may  
 “ be pardoned for being too regardless of her  
 “ own.”

(*Public Advertiser*, February 3. 1785.)

I have said that George Steevens was ostenta-  
 tious. It was at one time his great delight to  
 purvey for the suppers of Henderson. The finest  
 articles of Leadenhall and Covent Garden markets  
 used to solicit his acceptance, as the produce of  
 the “*farm in Essex*.” Henderson was attached  
 to hot suppers, and at such times, the founder  
 of the feast would drop in after the play, and,  
 apologizing to Mrs. Henderson for not drawing

to the table (for he never eat supper), request to be indulged with the liberty of mingling in the conversation; and would sit by the window enjoying the pleasure, which his costly vanity had enabled him to bestow. But enough for the present of this singular man, and his persecution of Mrs. Siddons. I shall occupy but little more space in the remaining observations upon the present performance of Macbeth. Some of the other leading characters, however, should here be specified. I cannot find it in my heart to deny any performer of that day his place in the commemoration of that *great feast*.

Brereton was the Macduff; Bensley being unwell, they borrowed Hull from the other house for the Banquo. Old Barnister sang the Hecate in the best style, and the George, and the Phillips, and the Wrighten, at the head of the chorus of witches, gave the usual quantity of personal and vocal charms, in aid of those of the blacker spirits of the night. Linley had taken great care of the music, and it had, perhaps, on the whole, never produced equal delight. But matchless as it is, *per se*, it brings this mighty tragedy too near to the character of opera, and the time occupied by the choruses breaks in dreadfully upon the progression of the interest. Besides, too, that such an undisciplined mass of all ages, and of both sexes, as now occupies the stage, is unavoidably the most opposite thing in the world to the severe

character of the play. Although I feel the advantage of spectacle, and, indeed, its absolute necessity to the modern stage, I yet am obliged to say, that candidly reviewing the additions made to the plays of Shakspeare, I know of nothing at all worthy to be connected with his composition. Where Dryden and Davenant failed, it might be idle to expect any thing from Tate. What Cibber has done for Richard the III. forms a solitary exception: it is not barely excusable, it is positively good, if he indeed wrote the masterly soliloquy upon *conscience*, and in any other author "I know no touch of it."

The royal family at this time were particularly attentive to the performances of Mrs. Siddons, and on the 7th of the month Macbeth was repeated by command. His Majesty was extremely attached to the stage, and had been greatly delighted at the other theatre, by Henderson's performance of Benedick, in Shakspeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*. He very graciously sent to that great actor a message by Sir Charles Thompson, directly from the royal box: it expressed not merely the praise of the sovereign, but an intimation that, "if the king were manager of a "theatre, Mr. Henderson would perform upon the "same boards with Mrs. Siddons." His Benedick was indeed a most masterly effort of his art. A thousand little traits of whim and pleasantry sparkled from his luxuriant fancy. It was one of the

neatest things in the world as he uttered it, the exit of Benedick then captivated with Beatrice, "I'll go get her picture." The challenge to Claudio, and the menace, "You'll let me hear from you," merit equal eulogium. It was certainly the finest comic acting in my time. But here was the great difference in these masters of the art, an alteration of sentiment did not with them unsettle a character. Henderson was as truly Benedick when defying Claudio, as when he laughed at him for turning orthographer.

To show that the memory will not always supply that which is known best, that a slight intrusion of other thoughts, a casual noise, some unusual object catching the eye, or any other trivial matter will sometimes defeat the soundest recollection, Henderson one night got imperfect in Benedick. It was in his soliloquy in the second act, in Leonato's orchard.

"I do much wonder, that one man, seeing  
"how much another man is a fool, when he  
"dedicates his behaviours to love, will, after he  
"hath laugh't at such shallow follies in others,  
"become the argument of his own scorn, by  
"falling in love!"

Henderson, after stating his first position, and uttering the separated word *will*, could not supply the following expressions, and made a sudden stop. The prompter, knowing his actor, and supposing it as impossible for the words of Benedick

to escape from Henderson's memory, as from the prompt-book itself, had, for a few minutes, quitted his seat at the wing, and in course did not perceive the dilemma. Henderson began again, and stopt precisely at the same word : he then became vexed, and loudly called out *give me the word*. Upon this the audience gave him the usual signs of their favour, and he rose from the seat on which he reclined, and bowed. By this time the prompter, Wild, was returned to his place, the words wanted were given, and he proceeded as usual.

At Covent Garden Theatre on the 4th of February the Orphan was done for the purpose of displaying the two new performers. Holman was the Chamont, Pope the Castalio. The noble manner, the dignified and superior carriage of Pope, were highly admired. Holman, to counterbalance the slightness of his figure, was, perhaps, a little too vehement occasionally, but it was a spirited, sensible performance. Miss Young, the Monimia, was now in earnest thinking of Castalio. Farren, transferred from Drury Lane, was the Polydore.

Holman, on the 15th, took Hamlet for his benefit : it was a bold attempt ; but his success justified the measure. There was against him, the prescriptive fame of Henderson at his own theatre, and the powerful impression made by Mr. Kemble at the other. Hamlet's character is to be gathered from himself. He is aware of his own vacillation,

and thinks meanly of his nature, on account of that craven scruple that paralyses all his purposes. To such a performance, therefore, Holman could only be competent by a rigid cheque upon himself. To be Hamlet, he must cease entirely to be Holman. This, perhaps, was more than could fairly be expected, and unquestionably, there were passages in which the ardour of the actor hurried him beyond the just temperament of the character ; but it was, on the whole, greatly admired ; and in Dublin, I incline to think, where he found an audience of kindred warmth, Holman's Hamlet had at least the preference of the many.

On the 21st of the month, for some reason which has escaped me now, the Critic of Sheridan was played at Covent Garden. Its exhibition was scandalously imperfect, as might be expected, thus got up in haste, and a very rational disturbance restricted its performance to the place of its production.

On the 25th, commenced at Freemasons' Hall an entertainment, which I have already alluded to, and which was attractive beyond parallel. I speak of Readings by Mr. Sheridan, senior, and Mr. Henderson. The grand room of that building literally overflowed on these nights. Sheridan, to most of his audience, was better known as a teacher of elocution than an actor ; his books had established a reputation for accuracy, and although his system of pronunciation is now somewhat neglected, he

will seldom be found without authority for what is deemed most capricious. The reader will excuse one instance in proof of this assertion. The word SATIETY, is commonly pronounced, I think, with the full power given to all the letters as they stand, and the accent on the letter *i* in the second syllable. Mr. Sheridan pronounced it as if written *sassiety*. In his justification, let me mention, that throughout the accurate and beautifully printed Homer of Chapman, 1616, this word is spelt and accented *saciety*, which proves that this imagined innovation was actually the orthoepy of Shakespeare's age. Mr. Sheridan certainly selected his own readings rather as lessons of instruction than amusement. To Henderson was assigned the romantic, the pathetic, the gay, the humorous, and even the burlesque. His friend Caleb Whiteford gave him some suggestions; George Steevens probably more. His kind and most affectionate admirer, the Rev. C. Este, was constantly at hand to be consulted, and no man better knew the taste of the public. Then a young man, I had myself the pleasure, at his request, to run through the volumes of the Poetical Calendar of Fawkes and Woty, in the search of graceful levities for this great object. Had he lived, there can be no doubt he would have converted this, his peculiar excellence, into a source of annual emolument, greatly exceeding that derived from the theatre. What that equally astonishing person, Le Texier, did by

French readings in Lisle Street, Mr. Henderson would soon have found it practicable to do in English ; nor needed he to have restricted himself to the season of Lént for such exertions. A residence better suited than his actual house in Buckingham Street, and a subscription for a course of a limited number of nights, would have settled the success, beyond the resisting power of the patentees, who now, at all events, allow every sort of innovation upon their prerogatives.

Le Texier was at this time attended by a very fashionable circle, at his house in Lisle Street, Leicester Square. My younger readers may thank me for some description of the place and the performance. The whole wore the appearance of an amusement in a private house. On ascending the great staircase, you were received in M. le Texier's library, and from that instant you seemed to be so incontestibly in France (as Sterne has it) that the very fuel was wood, and burnt upon dogs instead of the English grate. You then passed into the reading room, and met a dressed and refined party, who treated him as their host invariably. His servants brought you tea and coffee; in the interval between the readings, silently and respectfully. Le Texier, too, himself, came into the library, at such pauses, and saluted his more immediate acquaintance. A small bell announced that the readings were about to commence. He was usually rather elegant in his dress ; his countenance was



handsome, and his features flexible to every shade of discrimination. Le Texier *sat* at a small desk with lights, and began the reading immediately upon his entrance. He read chiefly Moliere, and the *petites pieces* of the French Theatre ; but how he read them as he did, as it astonished Voltaire, La Harpe, and Marmontel, so it may reasonably excite my lasting wonder. He marked his various characters by his countenance, even before he spoke, and shifted from one to the other without the slightest difficulty, or possibility of mistake. In Paris, he had at first even changed the dress of the characters rapidly, but still sufficiently : this to our taste was pantomimic, and below him. “ He had “ that within which passeth shew,” — a power of seizing all the fleeting indications of character, and “ with a learned spirit of human dealing,” placing them in an instant before you, as distinct as individual nature, as various as the great mass of society. He did all this, too, without seeming effort ; it was, in somewhat of a different acceptation, a *play* both to him and to his audience. There was no noise ; little or no action ; a wafture of the hands to one side indicated the exit of the person. I cannot assign a preference to the reading of any one character in the piece ; they all equally partook of his feeling or his humour. To my judgement, he was as true in the delicacy of the timid virgin, as in the grossest features of the bourgeois gentil-homme. I will venture to say, that no intelligent

visitor of Le Texier can think differently of his astonishing talents.

What was his house is now Bonnett's, the coach-maker's, and looks down upon the square, through Leicester Street.

“ On flying cars new sorcerers must ride.”

Such were the two great readers of the time. Le Texier was, I think, essentially dramatic in his reading. I have heard him read passages from De Lisle, and other modern didactic or epistolary poets ; but he required the dramatic form of composition to show the extent of his powers. Henderson was not at all confined. From the prophetic writings in the Old Testament, to the humble prose of Dodsley's *Esop*, he read in a way so masterly, as to be literally beyond even a partial rivalry. As, to use his own phrase, “ he had never “ studied under any Demosthenes maker,” it can only be said, that the quality of his *attention* as a reader must have exceeded that of other men ; that his taste was surer, and his organs more flexible than theirs. All other readers in my time have wanted diversity : they palled upon the ear. These two alone had the power to fascinate with excellence even beyond the stage itself — because the whole of the characters in a drama were in this way exhibited with equal force of talent, which can never happen in any company of actors upon the stage. Two or three parts there will be finely sustained, and the rest thrown away.

It is, however, after much consideration of the subject that I am of opinion, the comic theatre of France is much better suited to the reader's desk, than that of our own country. The comedies of our neighbours are more regular, the *liaison* of their scenes renders the business simpler, and gives the interest greater continuity. Our frequent change of scene, where the ear receives *all* the intelligence, begets ambiguity. Our painted scenes are explanations highly essential to our drama.

To resume the progress of our theatres. On the 8th of March 1785, the play of Othello was acted at Drury Lane Theatre: Othello by Mr. Kemble: Desdemona, Mrs. Siddons. The dress of the moor at that time, was a British general officer's uniform, equally improper with the moorish jacket and trowsers of modern times. The general of an Italian state would wear its uniform; he would never be indulged with a privilege of strutting about like 'a malignant and a turbaned turk' at the head of a christian army. Mr. Kemble always played parts of this character very finely. He was grand and awful and pathetic. But he was a European: there seemed to be philosophy in his bearing; there was reason in his rage: he acted as if Othello truly described himself, when he calls himself "one not easily jealous." He had never, I think, so completely worked himself into the character as to be identified with it, as

was surely the case in his Hamlet, his Macbeth, and his King John. It was, at most, only a part very finely played. One of the sublimest things in language, the professional farewell of Othello, came rather coldly from him. But I can safely say, that Mr. Kemble's powers were in a state of gradual improvement for twenty years after this performance, until they attained their perfection, at Covent Garden Theatre, in the exhibition of Brutus, Coriolanus, and Cato.

“*Tantæ molis erat ROMANAM CONDERE GENTEM.*”

He had at all times a difficulty to strive with, that would have subdued any moderate love for the profession, an habitual cough, that required to be lulled and soothed, and that in some measure restrained the full flow of his declamation; but his ardour in the cause taught him to surmount this, and every other impediment.

Desdemona was not a character to call forth all the powers of Mrs. Siddons; she is too heroic in her person to be the natural representative of this fond, trusting, meek, and unresisting woman. But she conceived the character perfectly, and in the delicacy, anxiety, stupor of the great scenes, and the playfulness and grace of the lighter, left models of thought, and gesture, and tone, to more fragile representatives of the character. I well remember the emotions she excited in me, and, as it seemed, in the

audience; but in the page of one critic of the time, I stand confuted on the authority of St. Evremont, who said, it seems, of the modern performers of his times, what I suppose a certain order of critics repeat at all times: — “What ought to be tender is only tenderness; surprise holds the place of emotion, and astonishment of all the genuine passions. Our sentiments are not sufficiently deep; and the affections being but half touched (*half* touched!) excite in our souls but imperfect movements.” A critic does not often know the state of his soul with sufficient accuracy, to account *truly* for these imperfect movements. I confess, without much shame, that I have not the writings of St. Evremont in my library, and have not, therefore, the means at hand of informing myself from the original *what* the translation was intended to convey; but the beginning of it is quite unintelligible as it stands, and it is only safe to pronounce of the English critic’s design, which was to depreciate our great actress. I will mention some of her striking points in the performance of this gentle sacrifice, and leave St. Evremont and the critic as I found them.

I question whether equal discrimination was ever before given to the answer of Desdemona to her father before the senate —

“ My noble father,  
I do perceive, *HERE*, a *divided* duty :

To you, I am bound, &c.  
But *here's my husband;*"

and in the second act at Cyprus, while expecting the arrival of Othello, and the *endurance* of Iago's ribaldry. The intercession for Cassio, beyond measure winning —

"What! Michael Cassio,  
That came a wooing with you."

The second scene of the third act had a beauty of expression in the countenance, that offered one of the most striking and variable pictures ever contemplated; it was where Othello, holding her hand, exclaims —

"This hand of your's requires  
A sequester from liberty, fasting and prayer,  
Much castigation, exercise devout;  
For here's a young and sweating devil here,  
That commonly rebels."

The surprise arising to astonishment, a sort of *doubt* if she heard aright, and that being admitted, what it could *mean*; a hope that it would end in nothing so unusual from him as *offensive meaning*; and the slight relief, upon Othello's adding —

"Tis a good hand, a frank one:"

all this commentary was quite as legible as the text.

The second scene of the fourth act, where Othello speaks too plainly to be misconceived, had

beauties that cannot be described; the highest, however, was the deep concern that *Othello* should so grossly err, a feeling that subdued all petulance at being unjustly accused. The delicacy that quite electrified the house in the subsequent address to Iago: —

“ *Des.* Am I that name, Iago?

*Iago.* What name, fair lady?

*Des.* Such as, she says, my lord did say I was.”

Nothing like this, I persuade myself, can be found in any author but Shakspeare; can any other being speak it as Mrs. Siddons did? The kneeling adjuration, the pathos, that swelled upward, as she uttered the words —

“ Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense,

Delighted them in any other form;

Or that I do not *yet*, and ever *did*,

And ever *will*, though he do shake me off

To BEGGARLY DIVORCEMENT, love him dearly.”

O no, Monsieur St. Evremont, whatever might occur in your times, these affections were NOT *half*-touched in ours; they were assailed with the fullest power: the lancet was in the centre of the vein, “the life blood followed it.”

The late king greatly enjoyed the talents of Mrs. Siddons, and the effect of any new performance was immediately reported to him. Their Majesties commanded this play for the 12th, and attended to the whole with the deepest interest.

Mrs. Siddons and Mr. Kemble had the honour of reading also, to their royal patrons, at the palace, and the family, in all its branches, testified the greatest zeal to promote their success. Othello was a part which Mr. Kemble was permitted to retain; it gave him one striking opportunity of acting with Mrs. Siddons. As he took Macbeth for his benefit on the 31st, he then showed his deep study of that character; it was, however, for that night only, and Mr. Smith resumed his prescriptive right on the 19th of the following month.

The attention of Mr. Kemble was, about this time, most particularly excited towards the character of Macbeth, by the publication of a fragment by the late Mr. Whateley, author of *Observations on Modern Gardening*, comparing the two characters of Macbeth and Richard; and as to the article of courage, asserting it “to be in Richard *intrepidity*, and in Macbeth no more than *resolution*: “that in Macbeth it proceeds from *exertion*, not “from nature; in enterprize he betrays a degree “of *fear*, though he is able, when occasion requires, to stifle and *subdue* it.” To this notion of Mr. Whateley's, Mr. Kemble could by no means assent. It recalled him to a very minute examination of the authorities, and in the following year, 1786, under the title of *Macbeth reconsidered*, he published a small tract in answer to Whateley's Remarks, an essay which he subsequently resumed and augmented.



The great error, which appears to me to have been committed by Mr. Whateley, is the attributing to original disposition what is a change produced in Macbeth by "*supernatural soliciting*"—a train of predictions so rapidly verified in part, as to secure attention, and enforce credit to those which remained yet unfulfilled. The mind of Macbeth has a decided leaning to superstition; he is a fatalist, and conceives that certain beings may be the organs of destiny. Whoever once admits the predominance of external agency, necessarily remits some of his personal and mental energy. Fate will always bring its decrees to their completion. It is useless to question what has been pronounced by spirits, "to whom all mortal consequences are "known." And when at last they are found to have "paltered with us in a double sense," and the illusion, which kept the "word of promise to the ear," is fatally "broken to the hope," nothing but despair can ever rouse those powers which have been enfeebled by expectation, and are palsied by final disappointment.

As to occasional *remissions* of courage, it was by no means difficult for Mr. Kemble to show, that there could be found in Richard instances exactly parallel with those imputed to Macbeth. The English usurper seemed to Mr. Whateley to be superior in fortitude, because his nature was originally *wicked*, and if his argument proved any thing, it would seem to prove, that the highest degree of courage

could not consist with virtue and moral discipline : but Shakspeare meant to show in Macbeth, that in a nature originally good, it could not survive their loss.

In the argument, perhaps, Mr. Kemble contended for a longer existence of Macbeth's courage, than it actually had : it died a *natural* death ; it was never a brutal daring that looked on good and ill alike ; it was the servant of principle, and could only inhabit a bosom franchised, pure in its allegiance, and just in all its purposes. What it would even "highly, that would it holily." When, therefore, an honourable ambition had once been lured into inordinate desires, and conscience had submitted to means equally impure, the courage of Macbeth could not outlive the fall of every other virtue. The habits of the military man, to be sure, remained—he issued orders as a General, and fought expertly, as one long practised in the use of arms ; but no longer relying upon himself, as when he confronted the rebel Macdonwald, he continues to cling to illusive predictions, at length "pulls in resolution" even as to them, is seized with remorse, the last expiring glimmer of his original virtue, and dies in despair, on the sword of him whom he had most injured.

But if, in combating Mr. Whateley, our great actor had seemed to carry his respect for Macbeth's courage rather higher than, without controversy, he would have done in his performance of

the character, his feelings were correctly true ; and from this, his first exhibition of Macbeth in town, to his last, it maintained the same features of discrimination, as I have endeavoured to point out.

At a future time, I shall be called upon to notice particularly the various improvements in the representation of this noble tragedy, derived from the taste and knowledge of Mr. Kemble. I shall then go minutely into his performance of the character, and examine how far he realized the high poetical creation of Shakspeare.

On the 14th of April, Mason's tragedy of Elfrida was acted by royal command. Its principal characters were thus represented. Athelwold, Smith ; Edgar, Brereton ; Elfrida, Mrs. Siddons. The men should certainly have exchanged parts. However, there might be personal reasons for the arrangement. I can hardly think that Elfrida could have been chosen by the great actress, as calculated to add to her impression upon the public mind. It probably arose out of the private studies of the palace, and was a mere wish to hear the pure sentiment and beautiful versification of this regular drama from the graceful powers of Mrs. Siddons.

At this time, I remember there was an insinuation afloat, that it was an indirect mode of reading a great moral lesson in a quarter, to which the interest of the piece was thought somewhat personally to apply. If so, its dexterity was not the meanest proof that could be given of the very admirable

sense of the lady to whom the design has been imputed. On this subject I do not choose to be more explicit.

To revert to the performance of the heroine by Mrs. Siddons, which I saw. It would have done honour to St. Cyr, in the pious days of Madame de Maintenon, but was utterly unsuited to the taste of a mixt audience. Mason, I imagine, derived from Milton his exclusive preference of the classic model, though he professes to study both to amuse and instruct his readers ; points, which Milton, according to him, could not condescend to consider, when in *Samson Agonistes* he wrote with a severe simplicity, which Athens herself would not have demanded. The author of *Elfrida*, in lamenting the barbarism of our theatre, inclined to think that our love of the irregular drama might admit of a cure, “ whenever a poet should rise up among us  
 “ with a genius as elevated and daring as Shak-  
 “ speare’s, and a judgment as sober and chastised  
 “ as Racine’s.”

The conduct of this regular drama is the most irregular thing in the world. The Chorus, who are so faithful, that Athelwold, without reserve, communicates before them the most important secret of his life, allow a stranger to them, upon uttering a most elaborate falsehood, to shroud himself in an arbour, whence, from the precious unity of place, he hears and sees every thing, which it was

their duty to **conceal**. Upon Elfrida's proposing to dress up one of these attendants to pass with the king for herself, **Athelwold** remarks to her, that Lord **Ardulph** always **attends** him, who had indeed made to him the first report of her beauty. Upon this **Elfrida** has a better stratagem to propose, she will "stain her complexion" with "the juice of dusky leaves or berries," as though **Ardulph's** knowledge could not detect the change of *complexion* as readily even as that of person. And in this not *beautiful* contrivance, her husband acquiesces in his very next speech, —

"Go, do then, as thy tender care directs"—

fearing, however, not that **Ardulph** may notice the assumed tawny front, but that she may be betrayed by "the liquid lightning of her eyes," or the "wavy  
"ringlets of her hair." But again she comforts him, in spite of **Ardulph's** penetration, for she now will "stoop her head," and "draw out an idiot phrase," and assume "a rude and peasant awkwardness." The Chorus is wrapt in admiration at the amazing virtue of **Elfrida**, who actually provides herself with a nameless azure flower,

"Which stains the pressing finger, with a juice  
Of dusky, yellow tinct"—

and would have used it, but that her father, the Earl of Devon, the pilgrim in the harbour, starts

from his hiding place, and frustrates the whole stratagem.

The actress, indeed, expressed in the happiest way the unbounded devotion of her love to Athelwold, and exhibited a model of purity and grace to a chorus of stage virgins, which is, as Sir Hugh says, "pretty virginity,"—but there was one occasion, afforded by the intelligence of Athelwold's murder by the amorous king, that Mrs. Siddons seized so powerfully, that the sublimest artist never approached her expression. The passage is this :—

"Nay, come not round me, virgins, nor support me.  
I do not swoon, nor weep. I call not heav'n  
T' avenge my wretchedness. I do not wish  
This tyrant's hands may wither with cold palsies.  
No, I am very patient."

It will, I should think, be obvious to most readers, that the poet's ear still felt the modulation of Lear's address to Goneril :—

"I prythee, daughter, do not make me mad ;  
I will not trouble thee, my child. Farewell !  
We'll no more meet, no more see one another ;  
Let shame come when it will, I do not call it !  
I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,  
Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove !  
Mend when thou can'st, be better at thy leisure ;  
I can be patient."

Upon her father's recommending Elfrida, in her agony, to go in and seek tranquillity, nothing could be more pathetic than the rejoinder of Mrs. Siddons.

“ Tranquillity !

I know her well ; she is death's pale-eyed sister ;  
She's now in yonder grove, closing the lids  
Of my poor Athelwold.”

There was something, too, awfully interesting in the devotion of her widow'd life to cloistered holiness ; and at every suspension of her address to heaven, the iteration of the chorus, “ Hear, Angels, hear,” in the same words, evinced the poet's fine taste and true feeling. Still, however, Elfrida could not be thought to have business sufficient for the stage ; and the nation may be contented to enjoy the drama of its own creation, without looking for the incompatible union, conceived above by Mr. Mason, of Shakspeare with Racine.

I am tempted here to notice, to the credit of the old stage, that on the 28th of April, the *Tempest* of Shakspeare was acted at Drury Lane, pure and unmixed. They had not yet embraced the additions of Davenant and Dryden ; it will, therefore, be a fit opportunity to take leave of that simple enchanting production. The exquisite beauty of Miss Philips was not more characteristic of Miranda, than her manner of speaking the language. Bensley was the Prospero of the night, and in truth the *only* Prospero. Old Bannister's Caliban contrasted finely with the Ariel of Miss Field. Some prejudice existed against the *masque* introduced by the immortal author, and it was, there-

fore, here omitted. To prove that it is *beautiful*, and that it can be *done* upon the stage, my friend Reynolds has introduced it in Twelfth Night, where it is greatly attractive, but has no business whatever: besides, that there, having no *magic* for the means, it becomes an interlude *pour passer le temps*, and all imagination is forcibly extinguished.

I take the liberty to remark here upon an *inadvertency* in the conduct of the Tempest, which I do not recollect to have been noticed by any of the critics upon Shakspeare.

When Prospero and Miranda are put on board the rotten carcase of a boat, and exposed to the waves that roared to them, and the winds that did them loving wrong by returning their sighs, Gonzalo provides the Duke with many articles that stood him in great stead; among them were *books* which were more precious than his dukedom. In a word, they were the volumes that in his prosperity had wrapt him in secret studies, and on his landing in the island enabled him to command the elements, and the spirits “native and indued to them,” to serve his purposes. But we have always difficulty, in the case of these necromancers, to know why he who can do so much cannot do more — why the prescience, that is so alive to the affairs of others, sleeps so profoundly as to their own? Prospero was totally ignorant of his danger, till it involved him in wretchedness; and his magical skill is of no use to him, in the exposure to which



his daughter and he are subjected. Surely he had nothing to do but seize one of his dark volumes, and provide himself with a royal vessel. Ariel, or, if he was strictly confined to his pine, some spirit of equal power, might have "flamed amazement" to the fleet of his enemies, and compelled them to return him to his dukedom. If every thing is left to preordination, what is magic? If such powers can be given by art, why is there difficulty? The only answer must be that, in his dukedom, Prospero, though *rapt* in secret studies, was not much *inspired*; and that it was owing to the profound application of his twelve years' residence, that he became the absolute master of external nature, commanded the lightnings of Jove, and even the grave to awaken its sleepers, and they obeyed him. He had, therefore, as her schoolmaster, not only made his *daughter* profit beyond other princesses, in studies becoming her youth and sex, but had grown *himself* at length consummate in his art. To be sure, it was upon his *arrival*, that he heard the sorrows of Ariel, in the cloven pine, to which Sycorax had condemned him; and it was by his *art*, that Prospero made the tree gape, and gained a faithful servant by thus setting the spirit at liberty.\* The objection cannot be much lessened. Enough,

\* It is not unamusing to think that Ariel should be threatened with a habitation of harder digestion than the pine :—

On the 30th of this month, Mrs. Siddons, for the first time in London, acted the part of Rosalind, in *As You Like It*. Upon no occasion within memory was more nonsense uttered than upon this. To hear some people, it might have been inferred, that the very term comedy, implied incessant laughter; and because Mrs. Siddons was delicate, modest, and never forgot that she was both a princess and unfortunate, she must, therefore, fail to give the slightest idea of Rosalind. But it might be worth while to consider at all times, in the performance of this enchanting character, whether its "better parts," as Orlando has it, are not quite thrown down by too decided an enjoyment of male attire, and too brave an exposure of the person of the retiring sex; and that if, under the mannish habit, Rosalind do play the sawcy forester, and *talk* somewhat freely, it can never be allowed her to throw away the modesty of her manners, and act, without shame, the indecencies of a wanton. The recollection of many readers will

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"If thou more murmur'st, I will rend an oak,  
And peg thee in his *knotty entrails*, till  
Thou hast howl'd away twelve winters."

You groan'd in the soft pine of Sycorax; how will your tender ærial being like the tough and knotty clasping of the oak, condemned therein to a confinement as long as that you first endured, and equal to the time your gentle service to me has lasted; "*twelve winters?*"

readily supply the instances at which I have just hinted.

Very early, indeed, it was apparent what would be gained by having so fine a speaker in the character. Upon her indicating a disposition to converse with Orlando after the wrestling, nothing could exceed the beauty of

“ My pride fell with my fortunes”—

again —

“ And overthrown — more than your enemies.”

But I abstain from such *reproaches* to a different, and, it may be, more popular school ; satisfied myself that one of these delicacies conveyed in the suitable tones, and graced by that modest deportment which always attended Mrs. Siddons, was actually worth more to the heart and head of an audience, than whole acts of rude and intemperate merriment. But the million think such matters *dull*. To the million, certainly.

The 24th of May this year exhibited a scene of great stage interest — a benefit at Drury Lane Theatre for Mrs. George Anne Bellamy, who had recently excited more than common attention by five volumes of her life, said (for what may *not* be said?) to be written by herself. She tells us therein, that she was born on St. George’s day, 1733. Now it is unfortunate to stumble at the very threshold of a life, for this date must be inaccurate ; she is

put up in the bills for Miss Prue, in *Love for Love*, at Covent Garden Theatre, on the 27th March 1742, for 'Bridgewater's benefit, being her first appearance. This, to be sure, might be a failure from juvenile timidity; because we afterwards find Monimia, in the *Orphan*, to have been called her first performance, on the 22d November, 1744, and then her powers were so overcome by the novelty of her situation, that she could scarcely be endued with sense and motion till the fourth act, when her mind, by a sudden spring, seemed to recover its elasticity, and Quin had to embrace a young heroine of the *genuine stuff*. As the date given for that of her birth would shew her at this time to have been only eleven years old, and as I suppose the audiences of *that* age not absolutely childish, I take it for granted that Chetwood was right when he dated her birth in the year 1727, and such an ascription will still leave a sufficient degree of precocity for fools to wonder at.

When Braganza had been performed, and Mrs. Yates had exerted her fine powers to a very crowded house, an address was expected from the brilliant speaker of a former day; but she had lost her faculties in the decline of life so completely, that at the age of fifty-eight she had become an imbecile helpless *old* woman, diminutive in stature, and uninteresting in countenance, and the delightful Farren made the acknowledgments for her benefit.

## CHAP. XI.

CLOSE OF THE SEASON 1784-5. — NO PRODUCTION OF ANY CONSEQUENCE. — BRIEF DISPLAY OF DRAMATIC TALENT IN SHERIDAN. — HIS REPORTED NEW OPERA AND COMEDY. — AFFECTATION AS A SUBJECT. — DESTOUCHES. — MURPHY. — AS TO TRAGEDY, NOTHING EXPECTED OR DESIRED. — JEPHSON CHARACTERISED. — OUR DRESSES. — SCENERY. — MR. KEMBLE'S REVIVALS. — COLMAN THE YOUNGER. — TURK AND NO TURK. — YOUNG BANNISTER. — HIS TALENTS. — PRIVATE EXCELLENCE. — KEMBLE AS A COMPANION. — MISS E. KEMBLE. — MRS. INCHBALED'S I'LL TELL YOU WHAT. — COLMAN SENIOR. — GIBBON. — AUTHOR BECOMES KNOWN TO MR. COLMAN. — ACCOUNT OF HIS MANNER. — MISS YOUNGE MARRIED TO MR. POPE. — MISS BRUNTON.

SUCH was the close of the season 1784-5. The review here given of it has shown that there was no new production of the slightest consequence. Dramatic talent had made a dazzling, but brief display in Sheridan: the wit that might have divided the palm with Congreve, was forced from its natural seat, and condemned to the benches of the opposition in parliament. Sheridan, indeed, talked occasionally of returning to his dramatic pursuits, and announced that his opera of the *Caravan* should speedily appear, and rival the

Duenna; and that he had a comedy in great forwardness, upon the subject of *affectation*.

But mixed up as he was with the endless struggles of the whig party, with the personal anxiety of placing his oratory upon a level with that of Burke and Fox, Mr. Sheridan could hardly be expected to find time for such a devotion of his powers as was necessary to the production of new dramas not inferior to the past; and in fact, Sheridan might be said to be afraid of the author of the *School for Scandal*. But that he longer retained the power itself, was, at times, not unreasonably questioned: his mind had taken a decided bent towards politics, and I know not that the muses ever allowed so fierce an invasion of their territory. Such hoarse chidings are apt to frighten the mimic sisters from their haunt, and lead them to prefer a calmer residence, though on a less fertile soil.

What the *Caravan*, at a happier season, might have been, as an opera, it will not be difficult for those to imagine, who remember the beauty and the sense of his songs in the *Duenna*. As to the subject of *affectation*, with all its laughable or loathsome singularities, in forming a whole comedy, whose characters are either to be its progeny, or its correctors, I cannot but think it one of the most tempting themes, that ever solicited the comic muse. But, alas! I know of no present writer, to whom it might be securely entrusted.

Perhaps if *Destouches* had previously treated the subject in the French mode\*, Arthur Murphy once could have made something of it. But he should have learnt to point his prose more for the tongue, that the actor might have had a tune in his dialogue better worth the singing. “There is a tune (says the late Mr. Horne Tooke) in all good prose; and Shakspeare’s was a sweet one.”† If Murphy be compared in this particular with Cibber, the *Way to Keep Him*, for instance, with the *Careless Husband*, it will appear how nerveless is his dialogue, and how unmeasured and lifeless most of his sentences. The French comedy, in its best specimens, being written in alternate masculine and feminine rhymes, has more care about its composition, and more point in its repartee. After Murphy had translated Tacitus, I know his comic dialogue would have been more like that of Congreve, and Vanburgh, and Cibber — but when Tacitus was finished, the age of invention was past with Murphy. I have heard him talk over the times in which he flourished, and of plays, which he would yet submit to this laggard age, if we had talent sufficient to act them. Alas! in this case, and in Cumberland’s, these “jewels of their fathers” have been seen, and some of

\* I consider his *Glorieux* to be the best specimen of that mode, and, indeed a *chef d’œuvre* of structure and composition.

† Diversions of Purley, vol. ii. p. 61.

them tried upon our theatres; but none of them have repaid the trouble of the experiment; and their fate has a little redeemed the character of managers, too often, by an irritated author, deemed insensible to their proper interests.

If such was the state of the modern theatre, as to comedy, it may be still more securely affirmed, that, in tragedy, nothing was now expected nor indeed desired. "The table was full," and any unbidden guest was deemed unqualified and presumptuous. Jephson had in two instances exhibited his power to supply the modern stage with at least musical versification, and a vein of thinking that was elegant and pure, if it was never very impassioned or characteristic. In Ireland, his muse had been powerfully aided by the genius of Kemble, and the nationality of his countrymen had raised him to the summit of his ambition. In England, his *Count of Narbonne* was deemed inferior to the romance from which it was derived: the supernatural was rather hinted than shewn: the author seemed conscious that the stage, at all events, was cold to the wonders of the gothic muse; that the scenic castles could no longer be haunted by the midnight spectre, nor be overclouded by a mysterious and avenging fatality. I will not here examine the propriety of his inference, but I can readily admit that Jephson was not the man to describe the magic circle, and perform the long disused ceremonies of the



enchanter. The wand of Prospero had been broken, and beyond all modern sounding his "book had been sunk." If he failed, therefore, in one great spring of tragic emotion — *terror*, he was not gifted in any striking degree with the other — *pity*. He had little pathos, for he was not a natural writer; and it is not by elaborate woe that the heart is ever subdued. The reader of discernment will find the requisites of tragic composition, admirably discussed in the "Elements of Criticism," by Lord Kames, chap. xvi. Upon the whole, the tragedies of Jephson are laboured into great correctness; his dialogue is flowing and energetic, his sentiments are always pure and just; but his characters have little discrimination, as human beings, and it may be said, that their condition even produces but slight mental difference between them.

In this state of the drama, as to novelty, Mr. Sheridan may be pardoned as a manager, if he did not lend any very favourable ear to the various solicitations for his favour: the pieces he did read may be presumed a fair sample of the commodity, and no human patience could possibly get through the whole. He, therefore, easily became a convert to a favourite opinion of Mr. Kemble. My late friend, like any other great artist, must have been expected to think deeply, as to the exercise of his own peculiar talent: he saw that the elder dramatists alone afforded him sufficient scope,

and he was too excellent a critic not to feel the palpable deficiency of the writers for the modern stage. It struck him accordingly that it was a waste of time and money to repeat perpetually these "modern instances" of total or partial failure; and that a grand and permanent attraction might be given to Drury Lane by encreasing the power of Shakspeare. This he proposed to effect by a more stately and perfect representation of his plays—to attend to all the details as well as the grand features, and by the aids of scenery and dress to perfect the dramatic illusion. In Paris, something of this nature had already been attempted; the fine genius and good taste of La Clairon in particular, meditated the manners and the costume of the ancients; and we may credit much of the account which she herself in advanced life gave of this matter, because it is in every essential point confirmed by the cotemporary relations of Marmontel and Voltaire.

Upon the London stage, nearly every thing, as to correctness, was to be done. The ancient kings of England, or Scotland, or Denmark, wore the court dress of our own times, as to shape; and as to colour, the rival monarchs of England and France opposed their persons to each other in scarlet and gold-lace, and white and silver. At the moment I am writing, King John has revived the exact habiliments of the 13th century, and either as to materials or elegance, the dresses of the mimic scene

might have been admitted at the ancient court. The old scenery exhibited architecture of no period, and excited little attention. The powers of De Louthembourg's pencil were devoted to the decoration of some catching novelty of the time — a picturesque forest might aid the enchantments of Arthur and Emmeline, and an exact view of Tilbury Fort form a back ground to the sleeping sentinels in the Critic ; but nothing could be less accurate, or more dirty, than the usual pairs of low flats that were hurried together, to denote the locality of the finest dialogue that human genius ever composed. The error was too universal to admit of a speedy or radical corrective. The vast old stock could not be entirely condemned, and the treasury could seldom bear the expense of any very considerable novelties. The scale of dimension was also too small to admit of magnificent designs. The structure, for it really was one, that latter years saw erected for the play of De Monfort, would have been condemned as unnecessary, or pronounced impracticable by the artists of Garrick's theatre. But the great reform was to take place in those parts of representation, which nothing but propriety can raise above derision or disgust — the whole tribe of mobs, whether civil or military plebeians, and their pasteboard and leathern properties. Whatever credit might be taken by managers, and the newspapers and playbills gave them much, for liberality in their expenditure, the fact is certain,

that the expense which attended one of Mr. Kemble's revivals would have defrayed the demands during a whole season of any former management. Such a change in theatrical arrangements he always desired, and through life steadily pursued; until at length he carried his design into complete effect, during his influence as a proprietor in Covent Garden Theatre. I have ventured this slight anticipation here, because it was at the period of which I am treating, that discerning persons saw Mr. Kemble destined, at no distant time, to be the manager of Drury Lane Theatre. To this object the wishes of his sister, Mrs. Siddons, no doubt powerfully contributed. He now turned his attention to various branches of scenic display, and read with infinite pains every thing that related to his art.

To resume the progress of theatricals. — That ever-delightful little theatre, in the Haymarket, continued under the direction of the elder Colman, and exhibited, in the decline of the father's power, the rising talent of the son. The offering of the present season was a musical comedy called *Turk and no Turk*, of which Dr. Arnold composed and compiled the music. The author's prologue, I remember, afforded one of the most outrageous specimens of his tendency to play upon the expression. He feels, he says, the critic's *kicking* —

“Not where the foot its usual bounty deals,  
But on his *head* — his head so *out at heels* :”

and he solicits the lash like a sprightly Westminster, as he had been.

“ Whip him like his own gig ! he’s more your debtor —  
The more you *cut*, you *keep him up* the better.”

It may be new to the public to learn that Reynolds, the *dramatist*, was Colman’s chum at the boarding-house. What two men have ever excited more scenic laughter ?

The younger Bannister, in *Turk and no Turk*, acted the character of Mat Moneo, a solicitor in the Temple, and it reminds me that I have not hitherto noticed the early talent of my old acquaintance. Although he had been a pupil of the great master, Garrick, he yet ripened slowly into positive excellence : the reason seems to be, that his efforts were long misdirected. He had been permitted to study tragedy, for which he wanted dignity, not *feeling* ; few men have ever touched the affections more powerfully, in characters upon his level. When he soared higher, an unlucky recollection of his *Apprentice* came across you ; and his mode of giving *Whiskerandos* in the Critic sealed his tragedy with the most decided burlesque, and disposed at once of Romeo and Zaphna, and Norval and Hamlet. To burlesque, in truth, his mind was so decidedly inclined, that her daughter Mimicry fastened herself upon him ; and, like his father, he indulged himself in imitations on the stage and off. The farce writers of his time, my friend, Prince Hoare

*most* successfully, sketched for his powers characters of *whim*, or characters in whimsical situations, which he supported by great agility, and flights of fancy singularly absurd and peculiar to himself. If any writer, as Morton subsequently did, threw into his part a dash of keen uncultivated feeling, Bannister drove it at once to the heart ; and, to use the most favourite allusion of Shakspeare's age, the tear and the smile sprung to the eye in company. With these qualities, he grew to be the delight of his audiences, whom he never disappointed by caprice or irregularity. Bannister became early wise, and preferred domestic quiet and permanent engagements, to the blaze of notoriety, or the passion for making a rapid fortune by provincial excursions. His union with Miss Harper gave him at once opulence and happiness. He seemed, in addition, to have wedded his patrons, the London public ; for his dramatic death alone divided their long and cordial connexion. The good sense and taste of Bannister led Mr. Kemble to a closer intimacy with him than any other member of the profession enjoyed, and much of his convivial time was accordingly passed in the company of the gay comedian. To read most of the articles, to which Mr. Kemble's death gave rise, one would be tempted to imagine that he "had never heard the chimes at midnight," and that his whole life passed away in plodding studies in the library to prepare his elaborate performances

on the stage ; soothed and sustained by the ascetic indulgence of

“ Spare fast, that oft with gods doth diet.”

The truth is, that Mr. Kemble was no such person. He loved study, and he loved and enjoyed company. He had, as I used to tell him, a grave Cervantic humour, that led him occasionally into the most diverting scenes of social enjoyment. But although he could and did unbend as much as most men of his time, he yet always retained the fullest title to respect : he had both genius and learning ; and, if these qualities required guardians, they might be found in the straight-forward integrity and *general* prudence for which he was always distinguished.

On the 21st of June, 1785, Mr. Kemble's sister, Miss E. Kemble, married Mr. Whitlock, one of the managers of the Chester company. This lady, by her private studies, became a very striking ornament of her distinguished family ; and I remember with great pleasure the few opportunities I have enjoyed of being in her society. Out of her profession, it was difficult to see her and imagine that she could want any thing to render her eminent — however, there could be but *one* Mrs. Siddons. I must think it injudicious in the branches of the Kemble family to croud as they did to London. It was unlikely that any very strong dissimilarities

should exist in their persons: as far as they resembled each other, in the same play they defeated the purposes of exhibition. The strongest contrast should exist in the performers of Shore and Alicia, Hermione and Andromache. The utterance of the sisters was all but identical as to tone and cadence, and pronunciation: as this tended to load the ear with certain sounds long repeated, it could produce nothing but satiety. One voice, if even melody itself, will a little tire upon the hearer through a part of any length: if such another meet you in a second character in the same play, it unavoidably injures the effect of the first. If parts strongly antagonized are uttered in the same key, nature is falsified. Such is the objection as far as the public is concerned in the cast of plays. Managers were, moreover, seldom so blind as to trust their interests entirely to the members of one family. However the feeling of relatives may be moderated by sound judgment, it will always predominate more or less; and it is best not to subject them to solicitations, which, if granted, may be unjust to others, and if refused beget at least a coldness, where the most entire confidence should exist.

The reader will recollect the mention already made of Mrs. Inchbald, her misfortunes and her merits. The elder Colman had taken great pains in the preparation of a comedy from the pen of that lady, to which he gave the title, "I'll tell



“ You what.” It was acted twenty nights with the greatest applause, and extended the usual existence of the modern drama. This writer has a striking tendency to the choice of situations perilous to female honour. If virtue be confirmed by the general lesson of her plays, it is well. But should the situations of the drama be dared in real life, because the heroine is extricated on the stage, it will be dangerous to have listened to the encouragement without a security for the protection. Dissuasives from the risk are infinitely preferable to either real or fancied instances of salvation. Gallantries *may* deprave the heart — fathers may sometime *not* be at hand. Mrs. Euston, in the present play, is a wife, with two children depending upon her for the means of existence, driven by want to the dreadful expedient of affecting to be a prostitute, in the hope, that among the sons of debauchery she may meet with a man of some humanity and generosity. And such a prodigy of wretchedness is exhibited in *comedy*, mixed up with persons and situations that convulse an audience with laughter! The single word *interest*, which has excited among us so much erroneous sympathy, and taught us to palliate so much actual crime, is to answer for this to reason and to virtue.

The Mogul Tale had so conciliated Mr. Colman to the interests of the fair author, that he wrote both prologue and epilogue to her comedy. The manager was indeed fast approaching to the close

of his dramatic career. Ten years before this, I infer, from the narrative of Mr. Gibbon, that he was considered rather fallen below the level of his *Jealous Wife* and *Clandestine Marriage*. The extract is curious on many accounts ; it exhibits an union of wits for the benefit of a brother.

“ ‘To Mr. HOLROYD.

“ January 29th, 1774.

“ I AM now getting acquainted with authors, managers, &c., good company to know, but not to live with. Yesterday I dined at the British Coffee House, with Garrick, Colman, Goldsmith, Macpherson, John Hume, &c. I am this moment come from Colman’s *Man of Business*. We dined at the Shakspeare, and went in a body to support it. Between friends, though we got a verdict for our client, his cause was but a bad one. It is a very confused miscellany of several plays and tales; sets out brilliantly enough, but as we advance the plot grows thicker, the wit thinner, till the lucky fall of the curtain preserves us from total chaos.”

It will be recollected, that this remark proceeded from a critic of the most refined taste, and habituated to the artful exactness of the French comedy. In what is called *structure* neither Colman, nor any of his cotemporaries at all excelled. It was a merit that did not belong to the British school. They wrote occasionally gay and even brilliant scenes ; and sometimes *almost* invented a new and delightful

character ; but they had lost the manly force of the genuine English drama ; and watched the French stage with anxiety, as we of the present day still do, in the hope of something which could be lowered or raised into entertainment for a people, styled *the most original thinkers in Europe*.

It was about this time that I became known to Mr. Colman, through the kind introduction of a friend. I was presented to him at his house in Soho Square, No. 28, at present inhabited by a Mr. Hume. Mr. Charles Kemble's house is separated from it, by the paved court on the south side of the square. He received me very politely, and I was much struck by the exact resemblance of his portrait, by Gainsborough, which hung over the fire-place in his sitting-room. His manner was calm, neat and unforced, not at all loud and decisive ; but had the temperance and smoothness and dignified ease of one who remembered that he was a gentleman. He talked of Garrick as an actor to a young man, who then thought there was no subject so delightful ; and I remember that a new dress for Richard III. being announced to him, we had it brought into the room, and examined the splendid but rather diminutive habitation for the "soul of Richard." How near Colman as an actor approached to our Roscius, I cannot be expected to tell ; but he took this dress down with him to the Wynnstay theatricals. The author of the "*Biographia Dramatica*," says, it was in 1785, that

is about the period I am recording, that he gave to the public his translation of "Horace's Art of Poetry," with a commentary. He is mistaken; that work had been published two years before. He was then, as he told me, bringing all his stock of little matters together, with a view to forming about three volumes of light reading for the parlour, and then he believed he had done all that could be fairly expected from him. This he accomplished in less than two years after our conversation.

Miss Younge, the most general actress of her time, this summer gave her hand, as it was expected she would, to Mr. Pope. This union was earnestly opposed by many of her oldest friends. They thought, and justly, that marriage at her age could add but little to her importance. She was at the head of her profession, affluent in her circumstances, and her own mistress: she had a house in Half-moon Street, and kept her carriage. Pope, however, it should be remembered, was in the prime of life, possessed of a handsome person, of considerable talent as an actor, and, as I think, greater still as an artist. In either the regular miniature, or small whole-length, with ornamental pencil back-ground, he approached the elegance and taste of the late Mr. Cosway. Mr. Pope, though he has through life, more or less, practised in both his professions, has found them not strictly compatible — the actor did not benefit the artist.

It was obvious to the dramatic world that Mr. and Mrs. Pope must carry great influence into any theatre. How Mr. Harris, an admirable manager, looked at it was speedily apparent. Mrs. Pope was not engaged for the winter season that followed her marriage. Holman and Pope he saw were sufficient checks upon each other; he therefore, to keep down any very formidable pretensions from the established heroine, turned himself after some young and beautiful promise in the art, which might strengthen Holman in the heroes of tragedy, and found the object he sought in the person of Miss Brunton. That young lady, at the age of sixteen, for she was born in the year 1769, had astonished and delighted the audiences of Bath by her Grecian Daughter — her Horatia in the Roman Father, and the character of Palmira in the translation of Voltaire's Mahomet. Mr. Harris saw her at Bath, and felt such confidence in her powers, that he resolved to entrust the female interest of tragedy to the early excellence of Miss Brunton.

## CHAP. XII.

SEASON OF 1785-6. — DRURY LANE OPENS WITH OTHELLO AND DESDEMONA, BY KEMBLE AND SIDDONS. — MISS BRUNTON IN THE ROMAN FATHER. — HENDERSON'S GREAT EFFECT. — HIS STUDY. — MR. KEMBLE'S. — MRS. JORDAN AT DRURY LANE. — SKETCH OF HER. — HOW RECEIVED. — MISS BRUNTON IN JULIET. — MRS. SIDDONS IN THE JUBILEE. — MRS. JORDAN IMOGEN. — HENDERSON'S DEATH. — HIS FALSTAFF. — THAT OF SOME OTHERS. — LEONIDAS GLOVER. — FREDERICK REYNOLDS. — HIS TRAGEDY OF WERTER. — MRS. SIDDONS ACTS MRS. LOVE-MORE. — MRS. CLIVE DIES. — GARRICK. — WALPOLE. — BURKE'S OPINION OF GARRICK. — COBB'S STRANGERS AT HOME. — MRS. WELLS. — TOPHAM. — ANDREWS. — OMAI. — DRURY LANE. — SHERIDAN. — DEATH OF REDDISH. — MRS. JORDAN IN THE TRIP TO SCARBOROUGH. — BURGOYNE'S HEIRESS. — MRS. BROWN A RIVAL TO THE JORDAN. — MRS. ABINGTON IN SCRUB. — MRS. BILLINGTON'S DEBUT. — BENEFIT FOR HENDERSON'S WIDOW. — MURPHY'S PROLOGUE. — THE DISTREST MOTHER. — RACINE. — MR. FOX. — THE CAPTIVES. — MRS. SIDDONS ACTS PORTIA ON HER BROTHER'S NIGHT, AND ELWINA IN PERCY. — MRS. JORDAN IN HIPPOLITA. — MISS KEMBLE MARRIED TO MR. TWISS. — RETIRES FROM THE STAGE. — MRS. SIDDONS IN OPHELIA, AND THE LADY IN COMUS.

THE season of 1785-6 was commenced strongly by both theatres. Mr. Harris had made some brilliant alterations during the recess, which added to

the comfort of the audience. Drury Lane showed the sound policy of displaying its greatest talent on the very first night. Othello and Desdemona were finely acted by Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons. Although in point of business on the stage, the part of Desdemona did not occupy the large space assigned to the heroines of Otway, and Southerne, and Rowe, yet being written so truly from the heart, the impression made by this accomplished actress was powerful in the extreme. Mr. Kemble was thought to have taken stronger hold than ever in the Moor, and terror was very highly wrought indeed in the awful rumination of the chamber scene. The house seemed unanimously to recognise now, that they had two great tragedians upon the same stage. Without looking away from the page of Shakspeare, to enquire what might be the native properties of the African, Mr. Kemble's Othello was a high poetical impersonation, and from his first entrance to his last, he wrapped that great and ardent being in a mantle of mysterious solemnity, awfully predictive of his fate.

At Covent Garden, on the 17th October, Miss Brunton made her first appearance in the character of Horatia in Whitehead's Roman Father. Murphy had the kindness to introduce her by a prologue, of which it may be truly said, that not even an hemistic was original, yet it showed the refinement of an experienced writer, and paid a very elegant compliment to Mrs. Siddons.

“ Old Drury's scene the goddess bade her chuse,  
The actress heard and spake — *herself* a MUSE.”

But in turning to his young heroine, he trifles egregiously with the common place simile of the “ unfledged bird,” and the bird sends him to the passion of the groves for a line of Thomson's, of which only a single word is changed —

“ And shivers every feather with *surprize*” (for *desire*.)

Miss Brunton had a voice of much sweetness, and eyes of great expression. I remember her self-possession in the character, and thought it, though a rather unusual trial part, yet, her powers considered, a judicious selection. But this play opened to Mr. Henderson, in Horatius, one of the most transcendant efforts of genius that the stage has ever given. It is in the second scene of the 3rd act, and the passage is that where Valeria relates the flight of Publius before the three champions of Alba :

“ *Valeria*. What could he do, my lord, when THREE oppos'd him ?

*Horatius*. He might have died ! O villain ! villain ! villain !”

Henderson saw, that if he spoke Whitehead's line as it stood, the patriot passion itself died for want of expressive diction ; with the finest tact, therefore, he dropt the heavy translation of Corneille's “ Qu'il mourut !” and burst out with the monosyllable “ *die !*” uttered with terrific energy.



The effect was to transfix the hearer, till a few seconds enabled him to thunder down an applause of the genuine kind, such as is at once felt to be the estimate and the reward of genius. The friends of this great actor, as it will be readily imagined, did not let so favourable an incident escape them. They gave their opinion its full weight with Mr. Harris, who had occasionally, they thought, discovered symptoms of alienation from this the greatest actor of his theatre. But alas! all their efforts were rendered abortive by an event entirely unlooked for, — the almost sudden death of Mr. Henderson on the 25th of the following month, November. To myself the shock was great indeed; I had expected many advantages from his friendship. There was an authority about his understanding, that determined a younger mind in its course. Prudence was a very marked feature in his own character, and a virtue which he strongly inculcated. Even in his books (and he loved his books), he was by no means solicitous about their condition. The Shandy from which he read in public would have somewhat annoyed those whom Mr. Steevens termed “the admirers of bibliothecal purity;” yet he passed a great portion of his day in his library, was a most diligent reader, and an acute and sagacious critic. Among his amusements entered the frequent transcription of old plays, and the perfecting of many mutilated copies of the original folio Shakspeare. To this labour

of love he was in truth much devoted, and he thus found even his relaxation strictly allied to his business. But it was not to carry pedantry into his art, that he was occupied with our early writers. In fact his memory was amazingly tenacious, and he had early made up his mind as to the characters he acted. I believe he varied less from himself than any great actor of his time. Mr. Kemble, on the contrary, seemed to me always to consider the work as still *to do* : he never dismissed a part from his study, as having giving to it *all* the consideration he was capable of. To the last of him, Hamlet and Macbeth had still, as he conceived, calls upon him for improvement ; and his studies, in the line of the poet of the Macedonian hero, appeared —

“ Never ending, — still beginning.”

Late in his career, I one morning found Mrs. Kemble going over Zanga with him as carefully as if it had been a new part : he did not rely even upon his recollection, and in the preparation of his effects left nothing whatever to chance.

But I turn from the last triumph of Henderson at the one house, to announce on the following night the first appearance of Mrs. Jordan at Drury Lane Theatre. Her engagement is believed to have resulted from the favourable report of Mr. Smith, who had frequently seen her act with the York Company in the race weeks, which he always

attended. Under Tate Wilkinson's management this fascinating woman placed herself in the month of July, 1782. She arrived from Dublin *with* her mother, brother and sister, and solicited with great humility an engagement at a moderate salary. The charm of her speaking voice, the languor and dejection of her person, excited the attention of the manager, and she spoke for him a few lines of Calista, the Fair Penitent, which let him know something of the highly-gifted woman before him. Her first performance of this character took place on the 11th of the month; the audience received her with astonishment and delight, and to exhibit herself with the full charm of contrast, after dying as Calista, in a few minutes she frolicked on again in a frock and little mob cap, to sing the song of the "Greenwood Laddie," and poured out that liquid melody, that through her life, no ear could ever resist, which rendered accompaniment useless, and science unprofitable, and seemed to furnish a proof, that to some beings the bounty of nature dispenses with the usual steps to excellence, and instinctively supplies what the most painful study can rarely reach and never surpass.

In the York Company she met the usual fate of intrusive merit; her rivals scandalized her in their morning gossip, and annoyed her during the evening's performance. They occupied the wings and the stage doors, and by persevering malignity, laboured to defeat and destroy her. But she was

fortunate in a manager whose justice would stretch even a little beyond his interest, and Wilkinson struggled to secure her fair play : but the heroine was sometimes indolent and sometimes refractory, sometimes capricious, and often imprudent ; she had arrived at her fourth season, strengthened in her powers, and a favourite of the manager. The permanent and unrivalled distinction of Mrs. Jordan was not at that time her prime characteristic—the *Romp*, indeed, had been cut down into a farce expressly for her in Ireland, and Priscilla Tomboy she often acted with great effect, but she yet lingered in the train of tragedy, and in the sickly society of sentimental comedy. The Country Girl had not even attracted her attention till she saw the part acted by Mrs. Brown of the same company ; she then studied it closely, saw all the opportunities it afforded for the display of her lovely wildness, her laughing vivacity, her rich and abundant humour, and made it her own, beyond all competition. It was from the circumstances just mentioned, that when she had begun to take root in the metropolis, she was reminded of Mrs. Brown, as having shown her the secret of the character, and the rival manager thought it worth while to try whether the reputed mistress could not *laugh* down the pupil. But there seemed no ground to detract from the general originality of the Jordan ; and the charm of youth secured her from a rival vivacity, which was rather ungene-

rously obtruded, in a lady past the season in which alone the hoyden can look natural and prove attractive.

Mrs. Jordan appeared the first night in town with no particular éclât; rather as one who came to know whether she had sterling merit, than as a conqueror pursuing her victory in the field, and marching to the capital in triumph. The house was by no means good — little fashion then entered her boxes — even the pit was not full. But she was received with shouts in her great points, and those who attended her débüt were unanimous in their reports of the roars of laughter which she excited. For several nights, it was easy to get a seat at any part of the performance. One critic thought her vulgar, another conceived that she might do in Filch in the Beggar's Opera, but denied any great comic requisites. — The actress pursued her course, and by the end of her first season, she had a train of fashionables on her nights, such as had before never assembled their carriages together, but on the performances of the tragic wonder — Mrs. Siddons.

The difficulty of fixing the Country Girl in London may be deemed surprising with our present knowledge of Mrs. Jordan; but she did not repeat the part till the 24th of the month, and acted it a third time on the 28th. On the 11th of the following month, she changed the style of her attraction, and in the character of Viola in Twelfth

Night evinced her tenderness and grace, and the neatness of her figure in the male habit. It is unnecessary to say more of a part, which became so peculiarly her own. The charm of her speaking voice in Viola found the happiest expressions of the great poet, and the harmony of the lines was felt by the most insensible.

At Covent Garden Mr. Holcroft produced his comic opera of *The Choleric Fathers*, with but slender success. He was a man of considerable talent, but rather hasty in the formation of his plots, and careless as to point in his dialogue, into which he was, perhaps, betrayed by his habit of dictation. It may be assumed as a position quite incontrovertible, that such dialogue as that of Congreve must be written, literally, by the *hand* of its author.

Miss Brunton, on the 14th of November, appeared in Juliet, and exhibited, like every other performer of the character, occasional deficiency. If the actress have the charming simplicity and artless affection of the early scenes, it is nearly impossible that she should possess the tragic vigour and profound art called for as the interest rises. Miss Brunton was too obviously a *declaimer* of passion — the heart was decidedly still. Yet study will always do something, and she seemed a refined and sensible actress.

But I must not omit the revival of the Jubilee at Drury Lane, on the 18th, because Mrs. Siddons actually condescended to be wheeled over the

stage as the Tragic Muse, and the attitude of her noble figure reminded the spectator of the picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds. As a full and most absurd contrast, the tall insipidity of Mrs. Cuyler figured as the Comic Muse. In this present age of processions, I still prefer the moving drama of the Jubilee. All the characters, it is true, cannot be finely done, but many of the groups will be perfect; and they display, let it be remembered, such strength of interest, and variety of character, as can be paralleled by no other author, and belong to no other stage.

Mrs. Jordan, on the 21st, ventured upon Imogen, but she could act only the *disguise* of the character; with Iachimo, in the temptation of her honour, the mingled astonishment, grief, indignation, reconciliation and virtuous dignity, were all wanting. Imogen is but a name for the perfect loveliness of the female character; and yet we have heard such absurdity from the poet and the critic, as

“ For stronger Shakspeare felt for MAN *alone*.”

I hope I have not been inattentive to the excellence of Fletcher; but in very few of his female characters will a steady comparison lie with those of Shakspeare; they have more of prettiness than passion. Fletcher is always a poet, but his heroines seem to have their origin in romance rather than nature, and some of his females disgrace the sex by the looseness of their conversation.

On the 25th of November, I am to record the death of Mr. Henderson, who, after a seeming recovery from a fever, died of some spasmodic action upon the brain, utterly unapprehended by his medical attendants. He had not completed the 39th year of his age, and yet had long been a perfect master in his art, the range of which he carried to an extent, that seems hopeless to succeeding actors. "I will not," said Mr. Kemble once to me, "speak of Henderson's Falstaff; every body can say how rich and voluptuous it was: but I will say, that his Shylock was the greatest effort that I ever witnessed on the stage." I remember it in its principal scenes, and I have no doubt whatever that it fully merited so high a praise; but I respectfully insinuate, that Macklin in the trial scene was superior to him and all men. Yet it may be proper here to say, that in many of his characters Henderson's superiority may be disputed; but that his performance of Falstaff is as much above all competition, as the character itself transcends all that was ever thought comic in man. The cause of this pre-eminence was purely mental—he *understood* it better in its diversity of powers—his imagination was congenial; the images seemed coined in the brain of the actor; they sparkled in his eye, before the tongue supplied them with language. I saw him act the character in the second part of Henry IV., where it is more metaphysical, and consequently less powerful. He



could not supply the want of active dilemmas, such as exhilarate the Falstaff of the first part, but it was equally perfect in conception and execution. I have already described his Falstaff at Windsor, which completed this astonishing creation of the poet. I have borne with many invasions on this peculiar domain of Henderson. It has in truth been an ungracious task to most of his successors; they seem all to have doubted their right of possession; to have considered themselves tenants only upon sufferance; and thus it was with King, and Palmer, and Stephen Kemble, and Ryder, and a whole tedious chapter of fat knights, who have roared and chuckled, at the slightest possible expence of thought; and, laughing much themselves, in their turns, perhaps "set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too. "Peace to all such!" It was the strong sense of Henderson's excellence in Falstaff, that made me miserable whenever Mr. Kemble announced his intention of assuming the character. He was not naturally a comedian, nor a man of wit. He might have given a fine reading of the text, but the soul of the knight would have been wanting. A Falstaff only endured out of respect for the actor's other merits, is, at any period of life, prejudicial to his fame. He could afford to leave the stage without aiming at the praise of universality, and I sincerely rejoice that he did so.

Henderson had died in good circumstances, and

it was determined to bury him in the Abbey. Every respect that could be paid to a good man and an excellent artist, was paid on this occasion; his remains were followed to the grave by his nearest friends; and his brother actors, from both theatres, saw the final honour bestowed, (perhaps the greatest he ever received) the placing him between Dr. Johnson and David Garrick. For many years I occasionally enjoyed the sad luxury of musing over his grave, and in my memory reviving the splendid triumphs of his genius. But though he was always presented to my fancy surrounded by a group of characters the creation of Shakspeare; yet at no great distance were strongly seen the whole family of Shandy, and the mingled sorrows and enjoyments of the Sentimental Journey. I write, with suitable indignation, that now MONEY must be paid for the privilege of approaching his grave, and the Commons of Great Britain doubt whether they have the power to drive the money changers out of the Temple!

On the same day that Mr. Henderson died immaturally at thirty-nine, Leonidas Glover dropt into the grave at the age of seventy-four. His Epic Poem rather disappointed the world. The critic showed it to be replete with poetic excellence, and the patriot bosom glowed at the very name of Leonidas; yet it faded away as deficient in its interest, and too narrow in its plan. What has been said tauntingly of the French, may be more

liberally and not less justly put : — *Les modernes n'ont pas la tête epique.* Mr. Glover wrote three tragedies, two of which were upon the subject of Medea and Jason ; the other had for its heroine Boadicea. Mrs. Yates was fond of Glover's cold declamation, and frequently displayed herself in the character of Medea. Glover, like Mason, loved and preferred the classic model, and would not see the incompatibility of the Greek chorus with the modern stage. His widow resided in a state of blindness under the same roof with the late Noel Desenfans, Esq., who attended to her infirmities with a friendly assiduity, that was never intermitted for a single day. She was related to the Wellesley family.

The 25th of November had yet another occurrence memorable in stage history. I mean the first appearance of Frederick Reynolds as a dramatic writer. He was then but in his twentieth year, and on that day presented to the Bath audience a *tragedy*, upon the subject of Werter. From Westminster School, he had passed into his father's office, and his father was the celebrated attorney of that name, so conspicuous in the times of Wilkes and liberty. His son, probably from some of the operations of politics to the prejudice of his family, has, through life, discovered the most decided abhorrence of all faction, and happily for himself, arrived at the wise conclusion, that petty evils might be endured, provided domestic security and

national strength flowed from the steady operations of government.

In a rather serious indisposition, he had been ordered to Bath by his physician, and in his small portmanteau had found room for his tragedy of Werter, which he composed in his nineteenth year. He placed himself on his arrival in one of the boarding-houses of that city, and sent his play to Mr. Dimond, the manager of the Bath Theatre. Several days elapsed, and he heard nothing whatever of his tragedy. It was rather a new thing to act a play, which had not previously been sanctioned by the London audience, and he began to conclude that his offering would be treated with contempt, when one of the guests of his boarding-house at table excited his attention by saying, that he had been that morning amusing himself at the theatre, and had among other things been shown two very beautiful scenes, which were in preparation for the new tragedy of Werter, coming out there. Reynolds gaily offered a bet that his communicative friend was mistaken, and for once at a bet heartily hoped he might lose his money. He was speedily set at rest upon the grand point, by a summons, from the manager himself, to attend a rehearsal of his play — and soon was initiated into the morning mysteries of the boards, so astonishing to a young author, and so ridiculous to an old one. The tragedy was brought out with the best aids of the Bath management. The hero was acted by

the manager, Dimond ; the heroine by a Mrs. Bernard, a very interesting woman, and judicious actress. The *dramatist* had the invaluable delight of seeing his effects, for the first time, in the tears of an audience piled up to the roof. The tragedy not only succeeded at Bath, but became popular through the country. Mr. Kemble himself, in the summer, acted the character of Werter, but always cut out the readings from Ossian, which the young author considered to be little short of treason to his interest.

Meyler, a bookseller, well known, wrote his prologue and epilogue, and whether displaying the author's tact or his own, introduced all the great theatric names, to which the Bath judges had affixed the stamp of excellence ; Siddons and Brunton, and Edwin, and alas ! Henderson. The author attended the company and his play, on the removal to Bristol ; of fame, he certainly got as much as he could possibly have expected : of money, though much needed at the time, he got not a sixpence. The theatre even expected him to pay the two guinea fee to the licenser, whose sanction was necessary, the play not having previously been acted ; this Reynolds properly refused. His play, however, made him known in the world, and procured him the usual introductions to the fashionables, who take credit in their parties for showing off any new feature of public amusement.

Reynolds then, and since, I believe, estimated this tribute at its full value.

Variety is to the theatre absolutely indispensable. The range of characters performed by Mrs. Siddons in tragedy was rather circumscribed ; but it was not owing to the powers of the actress, but to the want of power in the authors. To write an inferior part for Mrs. Siddons was, as to herself, nothing ; but it was destructive to the author. The public might forgive the modern bard, who was inferior to Shakspeare, and Otway, and Rowe ; but the admirers of Mrs. Siddons never pardoned the writer whose rash ambition had employed her talents on ineffective matter : she had seldom by a modern been written up to at all, and in the eloquent language of Steevens, “ her lips were sacred “ to the task of animating the purest strains of “ dramatic poetry.”

Still Belvidera and Shore, and Isabella and Mrs. Beverley could not be eternally represented ; besides, it was thought that Mrs. Siddons, powerful as she was, should not be kept for ever on the stretch ; but that some parts of a milder character should be mingled with the heroines of tragedy. On the 26th, therefore, of November, she acted for the first time Mrs. Lovemore, in Murphy's Way to keep Him. After many years observation of this great woman, I profess, I do not recollect a character which, in her manner, she more perfectly identifies than this of Mrs. Lovemore. But it

never charmed, because its effect could be but moderate. The audience had been used to see every eye in tears, and to tremble at the hysteric agony excited by her tragic power. They now beheld the mighty enchantress brought down to common and domestic life, learning a lesson instead of ruling the affections, and occupying a drawing-room with genteel deportment and calm good sense. To show Mrs. Siddons little, if at all, superior to other women, was to dispel something of her charm; to lower her value: I thought it injudicious; besides, the enchanting Widow Belmore kills *that* and every other part in the play. She repeated it three times, and then retired from the boards for some considerable interval, during which opera and the Jordan made a rather successful stand.

On the 5th of December, the celebrated comedian Mrs. Clive, died at Teddington, and was buried at Twickenham. She had lived for many years in great harmony with her refined neighbour Horace Walpole, who, though himself one of the most sensitive and fastidious of beings, delighted in the whim, the mimicry, and broad humour of Mrs. Clive. When *virtu* offered no pressing temptation, and even romance solicited him in vain, he had one unfailing resource—he could always “touch a card with the Clive.”

It was well known that this celebrated woman delighted in annoying Garrick, and in all proba-

bility Walpole rather spoke *her* feeling of Garrick than his own, when he called him “ a dull creature “ and an impertinent jackanapes.” I know, in truth, nobody who has treated him worse, except indeed, the *rancorous* UNKNOWN, who wrote the letters of Junius. HE addresses him in the elegancies peculiar to politics and criticism : “ Now “ mark me, vagabond ! keep to your pantomimes.” But let me rescue the great master of the stage from this vulgar trash, and show how Burke thought and wrote of him : “ I remember a conversation I “ once had with my ever dear friend Garrick, who “ was the first of actors, because he was the most “ acute observer of nature I ever knew ;” but, “ I am again falling into my usual vanity, in valuing myself on the eminent men whose society I “ once enjoyed.” — *Works*, v. p. 34.

The management of Mr. Garrick was not calculated to conciliate the authors of the modern drama. What is there really excellent, which he had refused ? Prudential considerations would lead him to reject all those flimsy pieces, which living, even by the aid of cordials, but their nine nights, gave the profits of three of them to the author. How was he assailed by the ruffian Kenrick, who having had the address to get a royal command on the *third* night of his play, modestly insisted upon the profits, not of his own attraction, but the King's !

On the 8th, Mr. Cobb produced at Drury Lane



Theatre his comic opera called the Strangers at Home. The incident on which the plot turns, however simple, is one capable of the greatest interest. Certain Florentines, returning from slavery, keep on their African dresses, to try the real dispositions of their mistresses and friends. Mr. Cobb did not greatly exceed the ingenuity of the Italian comic opera. But it is easy to perceive, that he might have worked such a subject into satirical exposure of the richest humour, and diversified his scenes with the most refined, or the rudest feeling. The music was by Linley, and much admired. During the confinement of Mrs. Siddons, the opera was extremely servicable to the theatre.

Mrs. Warren, a daughter of Powell, was received at Covent Garden Theatre on the 10th, in the character of Elwina, in the tragedy of Percy, with that generous indulgence which the merit of her father necessarily secured to her. She subsequently rather strengthened than weakened her claims, by some lady-like performances in comedy.

Mrs. Wells, too, crept out in the character of Shore; an experiment which her critical friends were so blind as to permit. As far as mimicry could carry her, she unquestionably went; and she always reminded the hearer of Mrs. Siddons or Mrs. Crawford. What her admirers termed simplicity, in humbler efforts, hung about her utterance in tragedy, and rendered it drawling

and mawkish. Topham's farce of the Fool followed it; he had made some alterations which were not improvements; and, notwithstanding the omnipotence of the daily press, failed in establishing his claim to be considered as a dramatic writer. He sometimes succeeded in the ludicrous of epilogue, but was generally careless, gross in his allusions, and very incorrect; he dressed his composition for the most part as he did himself, in the trick of singularity. The absurdities in fashion, for many years, were sketched in these lively compositions by him and Miles Peter Andrews; and it was thought essential to solicit their aid as the established masters of the ceremonies. Their efforts should occasionally be compared with those of Garrick and Colman, that writers may learn to be pleasant without vulgarity, and avoid the burlesque of both humour and character.

For the demands of Christmas the manager of Covent Garden Theatre prepared with superior spirit, and what was more surprising, with superior taste. He brought out on the 20th, a pantomime exhibition, called Omai, which by the aid of painting and music, presented to the people a living history of the discoveries of their immortal countryman, Captain Cook. The success of this elegant entertainment seems to have stamped a character upon the theatre itself, which has since constantly adhered to it. The manager, fully alive to the interests he had excited, secured sys-

tematically, the materials of his triumph. Artists of great merit were engaged in his painting-room ; and he constantly kept together a set of pantomime actors, the best in the profession, and facilitating the labours of stage preparation, by the habit of always working together. His machinery was well served, his processions were arranged with skill. In the contest with Drury Lane Theatre, Mr. Harris had this great advantage, his attention was directed exclusively to his management ; and as that vested in him absolutely for his life, he had no check upon him from partners in the concern, and could always command the necessary funds to carry his designs, however expensive, into effect. The great difficulty at the other house, was to get Mr. Sheridan to determine what should be done. When that was settled, the machine got with difficulty into complete action ; there were always pecuniary embarrassments, and unwilling tradesmen. With his force in tragedy, comedy, and opera, he ought literally to have shut up the other theatre. He never made even a drawn battle of it. In this respect, his play-house resembled his party. Opposition had all the splendid talent upon its benches, but it was beaten in the contest, and Pitt alone triumphed over Fox, and Burke, and Sheridan, and Windham. It was easy to perceive that the politician interfered with the comic writer and the manager ; and the usual advice was

tendered to him upon the occasion, to make his election between these houses of national representation. But he adhered to the one from an honourable ambition, and to the other for the means of existence. He was commonly deemed an indolent man; but, whatever he did for the theatre, (and its concerns were always submitted to him,) the part taken by so constant a speaker in the multifarious business of the senate was quite sufficient to fill and exhaust a mind of great application.

The last day of the year calls upon the historian of the stage, to record the death of Samuel Reddish, a distinguished actor in the days of Garrick. This unfortunate gentleman died in the Lunatic Hospital at York. It may be agreeable to the reader to learn here, that his first appearance at Drury Lane was on the 18th September 1767, in the character of Lord Townley, and that Mrs. Abington on that night performed the part of Lady Townley for the first time.

The *indolence* of Sheridan, it should be remembered, had in 1777, besides writing the *School for Scandal*, given to the theatre a very agreeable alteration from Vanbrugh's *Relapse*, called *A Trip to Scarborough*. To this production, the sprightly pen of Garrick contributed one of his neatest prologues, entrusted to the best of all comic speakers, King. I shall be excused for quoting two of his pleasantries.

“ No head of old, too high in feather'd state,  
 Hinder'd the fair to pass the lowest gate ;  
 A church to enter now, they must be bent,  
 If even they should try th' experiment.”\*

The *reason* of the alteration of the comedy is thus expressed :

“ As change thus circulates throughout the nation,  
 Some plays may justly call for alteration ;  
 At least to draw some slender covering o'er  
 That graceless wit, which was too bare before ;”

I know nothing pleasanter in this species of composition than such a use of Pope's allusion —

“ And Van wants *grace*, who never wanted wit.”

This comedy, on the 9th of January 1786, afforded another charming *Hoyden* to the genius of Mrs. Jordan. Thus calmly sitting in my study to retrace the fading impressions of her powers, I seem again to hear the magic of her laugh, and once more enjoy the sparkling expression of her countenance. Let none of the young and inexperienced doubt the record of these gifts, as though age resorted to fancy for charms, that memory never fairly supplied. That must be transcendent, which

\* Thus whimsically applying the sublimity of Shakspeare. See *Cymbeline*, Act III. scene 3.

“ This gate  
 Instructs you how to adore the heavens ; and hows you  
 To morning's holy office.”

imagination could not have pictured, if it had not actually been seen.

The 14th was proudly distinguished by the production of the *Heiress*, written by that accomplished man, General Burgoyne. It had been the work of a couple of summers, passed with his friend, Lord Derby, at Knowsley; and a purer or more interesting comedy cannot be found. It does not, to be sure, like the *School for Scandal*, lay claim to the whole empire of wit, but it never wants it where necessary, nor a better talent at all times; I mean the fine preservation of actual character. One might have expected that what so stern a critic as Horne Tooke sincerely admired\*, would have been hailed with rapture by the lovers of the regular drama. But, on the contrary, his characters were censured, as not completely original, by which could only be meant that they were not monsters; and it was an article of serious charge against him, that, when he says of Miss Alton, "for when she was formed, nature broke the mould," the confessions of Rousseau proved a capital larceny, in the expressions *Si la nature a bien ou mal fait de briser le moule dans lequel elle m'a jeté, &c.* To such flimsy or envious trash, Burgoyne was so humble as to

\* "See the *Heiress* (one little morsel of false moral excepted), the most perfect and meritorious comedy, without exception, of any on our stage." *Diversions of Purley*, vol. i. p. 369.

write an answer, and, as he has left nothing else of a critical nature, that I recollect, I have a pleasure in showing how well he understood the philosophy of his art.

“ *In point of originality of characters* — It is  
“ humbly hoped this comedy is not without it.  
“ But, present instances apart, it is submitted  
“ to the judicious, whether such an exaction of  
“ novelty as would make a resemblance to any  
“ thing ever seen upon the stage before, unacceptable, might  
“ not materially vitiate the public  
“ taste ; carry the major part of writers beyond the  
“ scope of nature and probability; and deprive the  
“ spectator of that pleasing and infinite diversity  
“ of shape and colouring that the leading passions,  
“ vices, and follies of civilised life admit. Love,  
“ avarice, misanthropy, &c. &c. if drawn a thousand  
“ and a thousand times with new shades, and  
“ in different points of view, will do as much credit  
“ to invention, and have as just an effect in exhibition  
“ as if Moliere or Congreve had never touched the subjects. It is not whether there may not  
“ be personages in the Heiress, in whom we may  
“ discover family features, that is asked, but  
“ whether they are not still individuals, with  
“ whom we have been hitherto unacquainted ;  
“ a question not for the author to determine.

“ *Original thought* — It has been observed, that  
“ there is an image in a speech of Lord Gayville,  
“ copied closely from Rousseau. Very possibly

“ it may be so. The author of the Heiress certainly has read that elegant writer ; and to show how easily invention may be deceived, he will quote another writer, (in his estimation, still more elegant) who thus accounts and apologizes for unconscious plagiarism. “ Faded ideas,” says Mr. Sheridan, “ float in the fancy like half forgotten dreams ; and imagination, in its fullest enjoyments, becomes suspicious of its offspring, and doubts whether it has created or adopted.”

How this admirable comedy was acted, I have already observed, as to its principal features, Sir Clement Flint, and Lady Emily. Miss Farren seemed to have absolutely identified herself with this elegant model of fashionable excellence ; and when she really in private life, assumed the dignity of her present rank, the elevation was deemed neither abrupt, nor surprising, but rather as if Lady Emily Gayville had obtained the superior title of Countess of Derby.

On the 23d, Mr. Harris, alarmed at the growing popularity of the Jordan, availed himself of the old report as to Mrs. Brown's being the real romp of the York company, and brought that lady out to check the presumption of her reputed scholar.

She acted Miss Prue in Love for Love, and was seen with considerable pleasure, as an actress who had claims to figure, face, and voice ; and was entirely devoid of that trick, by which the provincial performer supplies the want of genius



in the art. A party was soon formed to espouse this lady's pretensions, but the struggle could not be long. As to the public,—

“ Cold approbation gave the ling'ring bays,  
For those who durst not censure, scarce could praise.”

Jordan became, in theatricals, a new and enthusiastic delight; and her rival soon retired from the contest, to which, could even her youth have returned again, she would certainly have been unequal.

The two Romps next selected Lucy in the *Virgin Unmasked*, for a test of their merits; and Mr. Brown, the husband of the new actress, in the absence of Edwin, made a respectable stand in *Coupee*. I may be pardoned for not remembering much of this extravagant pleasantry by Henry Fielding. For a writer of his exquisite knowledge of human nature, his dramatic failure is a problem exceedingly difficult to solve.

The recovery of Mrs. Siddons, after her confinement, was announced to the public by a royal command. Their Majesties ordered the comedy of the *Way to keep Him*; and the great actress performed *Mrs. Lovemore* on the 6th of February. I have already expressed my opinion fully upon the policy of such performances; and, certainly, never myself saw her without that pleasure which so intellectual a being could not fail to inspire: in *Mrs. Lovemore*, too, there was leisure to admire her beauty. The youth of the present day are

acquainted with her dignity and power, and know the general style of her features; but they may believe me when I assure them that Mrs. Siddons was to the full as lovely, as they have ever seen her terrible.

It has by no means been agreeable to me to register so many rash attempts upon the tragic muse, and poor Mrs. Wells has paid the penalty of unsuccessful ambition. On the 7th, she made a more favourable impression in the mixed character of Rosalind; but the whine that was always felt, robbed it of the requisite smartness, and though bearable, the performance was far from good.

Why am I obliged to sully the fame of Abington by commemorating the utter and gross absurdity, which led her to attempt the character of Scrub for her benefit? The metamorphosis of her person, the loss of one sex, without approaching the other; the coarse, but vain attempt to vulgarize her voice, which some of my readers remember to have been thin, sharp, and high-toned, all this ventured, and producing nothing but disgust, I hope rendered the large receipt from the treasury itself less palatable than it had ever been upon any former occasion. Lady Racket atoned for it to the sex and to her friends.

Mrs. Billington, under the declared patronage of the Queen, came from Dublin, to assume here

the first line in opera, and, on the 13th, acted at Covent Garden Theatre, Rosetta in *Love in a Village*. She at once took her station as the first and best of all stage-singers in my time; and exhibited so much science, and taste, and flexibility, and feeling, that she was heard with delight in most of the airs, and astonishment in others. The pure and flowing melodies of Arne, acquired new graces from her execution. The majestic movement "In love should you meet a fond pair," produced an effect which, literally, haunted the ear, and made every singer try at least the immeasurable distance between them. There was about this lady, too, the steady composure which always attends great talent. She presented herself well to the audience; her self-possession sustained her through the protracted exertion of vocal power, accompanied by but little action. In addition to all this, she was a lovely woman, and graceful in every thing she did. Not many years ago, I saw again Sir Joshua Reynolds's picture of her; it was a work every way worthy of that great master, and expressed much of the character, which, by means so inferior, I have here endeavoured to delineate. For her second part, she took Polly in the *Beggar's Opera*, and in music of a simpler character, showed that she was mistress of every style, and knew exactly, (that rare knowledge in a singer,) the true limits of embellishment. Her mother, Mrs. Weichsel, was a cele-

brated singer of a very different cast, and I think resembled her daughter only in a voluble and brilliant execution. The family could boast another great professor in the admirable leader Mr. John Weichsel, whose vigour and precision, power, and taste, were so long the *soul*, I may say, of the opera band. Compared with other great leaders, I think I should attribute to him more *spirit*, without the flight that is usually found to accompany that quality, where it exists in any remarkable degree.

Mrs. Billington was as liberal as she was excellent; and I yet remember a conversation one night at the Hanover Square Rooms, in which she expressed her opinion of Madame Mara in terms which raised both those accomplished singers in my esteem.

Mr. Kemble, it will have been observed for some time back, was scarcely ever called on at the theatre. The Garrick school, as they were styled, had possession of management, leading characters, the press, and no slender portion of the public. He had to endure all this silently, under the conviction that his claims were only deferred, and that time would, ere long, without a struggle, give him all he wanted. He amused himself at this time by bringing out his farce upon a Spanish plot called the Projects, formerly acted at York, and now reconsidered, shortened, and improved. It was thought ingenious in its contrivances, but the

humour was either not sufficiently broad for farce, or faintly acted, perhaps both ; it was coldly received by the house, and as coldly withdrawn by the author. The fact is, that he had no great confidence in his powers as a writer, and either avoided the press altogether in his dramatic compositions, or was indifferent, or sometimes repentant, after publication.

The death of Henderson had left a deep impression upon the theatrical world. Mrs. Siddons, in particular, regretted in that great actor, the prophet who had first proclaimed her merits and announced the future triumphs of her skill. As soon as it could be proposed, she therefore tendered her services to Mrs. Henderson, for whose benefit a night was arranged at Covent Garden Theatre, which, with reference to the day in November on which her husband died, was fixed for the 25th of February. The play was *Venice Preserved*, *Belvidera* by Mrs. Siddons ; and the farce, *Three Weeks after Marriage*, *Lady Racket* by Mrs. Abington. The whole of the pit, on this occasion, was let at box prices, and a handsome sum was thus added to the provision, which Henderson's prudence had made for his widow and only child.

On this affecting occasion, Arthur Murphy wrote a prologue, which, somewhat curtailed, was spoken by Mrs. Siddons. There were a few points beautifully expressed —

“ And for his relatives, to help his store,  
An audience gave, when HE could give no more.”

The tribute to his social worth was thus neatly paid :

“ Expiring virtue leaves a void in life.”

With reference to the loss of his talents in the profession, there is always something ungracious towards the living in these extreme lamentations for the dead —

“ Who now like him shall animate the stage ?”

There is a kind of cruelty in forcing people to admit their own inferiority — that “ they are mere *shadows* to fill up the muster-book ” — crows and daws to flutter in the dramatic hemisphere, when “ the eagles are gone by.” In the long list of characters, who lost “ half their souls ” when he expired, I will not be so unjust as to say that more than one has totally died with him.

“ Falstaff, who shook this house with mirthful roar,  
Is now no counterfeit : he'll rise no more ! ”

The misty common-place of the muse attending the bed of sickness, and vainly trying to chase disease, — then, in wild despair, joining the mournful throng in the procession, and leading the way through the dim vaulted aisles of a poetic, rather than Westminster Abbey, all this the “ vanity of “ art ” was in sober truth nothing to the purpose, and to be cut out.

How impertinent such an attendant really is on

such an occasion, the surer taste of Sheridan rendered strikingly apparent. Hear how tenderly and truly he notices the interment of Garrick in the very same spot.

“ The general voice, the meed of mournful verse,  
The splendid sorrows, that adorn'd his hearse,  
The throng that mourn'd as their dead favourite pass'd,  
The grac'd respect that claim'd him to the last,  
While Shakspeare's image from its hallow'd base,  
Seem'd to prescribe the grave, and point the place.”

The last allusion was fortunate beyond rivalry ; equally appropriate on the present occasion, it had been used too recently for Murphy to repeat it, though the very greatest plagiarist among the dramatic writers of England. The office that Sheridan assigned the muse, when Sculpture should have raised a monument to her Garrick, was to hang over his bier —

“ And with soft sighs disperse the irreverend dust,  
Which time may strew upon his sacred bust.”

When Garrick called upon the genius of Roubiliac to execute for him a figure of Shakspeare, the call of genius was obeyed, and a bold and masterly work was accomplished. As to the monument erected to Garrick in the Abbey,

“ Treason has done its worst.”

It is a most graceless relief, and should be superseded by something of a more dignified character.

Mrs. Siddons took for her benefit, on the 4th of March, the Distrest Mother of Ambrose Phillips, and leaving Andromache, the part more strictly suited to her noble figure and maternal look, she assumed the stormy passion of Hermione, and fluctuated between love and rage with admirable skill. It will hardly be credited how little the English poet has varied from Racine's Andromaque, yet he seemed to claim the honour of a tragic writer for a mere version, everywhere inferior to the force and harmony of his original. The great defect of this tragedy is in the arrangement of its scenes in colloquies of two speakers, perpetually interchanged, and reversing the effect previously produced. Here this defect was inherent in the subject itself, and I know no artifice by which it could have been palliated. The mention of Racine reminds me, that my friend Kemble greatly preferred Corneille to the Euripides of France ; a preference in which I most certainly never could concur. Upon the publication of Mr. Fox's historical work, I was delighted to find my fondness for Racine sanctioned by the taste of that great and amiable man : he even meditated an edition of that poet, which would in course have been accompanied by illustrations of his genius, the more valuable, as the commentator, in his own character, seemed to belong to a bolder and more original school.

Modern tragedy was again destined to disgrace on the 14th of March. Dr. Delap's Captives was



endured for three nights, and then, like the spirit of Ossian, which pervaded it, was gathered to its fathers. The only thing noticeable in the tragedy was, that Kemble appeared in the genuine Scottish dress, but had no other actor on the stage to keep him in countenance. These solitary flashes of propriety denoted the zeal of the great actor for the truth of exhibition; a time was soon to arrive, when he could carry his wishes beyond himself, and produce a tragedy on the stage, through the whole of whose characters, illustrious, or mean, one correct, presiding mind should be clearly discerned. At present his power in the theatre was rather inconsiderable, for when on the 6th of April, he put up the Merchant of Venice for his benefit, his sister Mrs. Siddons acted Portia: Shylock was performed (funerals, too, are *performed*) by the manager, Tom King, and Kemble himself *walked* in the gentlemanly habiliments of Bassanio. But it was compensation rich, and rich enough, to be on the stage, and hear from the lips of Mrs. Siddons the triumphant delirium of joy when Bassanio has chosen the right casket.

“ *Por.* How all the other passions fleet to air,  
As doubtful thoughts, and rash-embrac’d despair,  
And shudd’ring fear, and green-ey’d jealousy.  
O love, be moderate, allay thy ecstasy,  
In measure rain thy joy, scant this excess;  
I feel too much thy blessing, make it less.  
For fear I surfeit.

I have stept forward to connect two performances of Mr. Kemble together, and therefore return to announce the removal of Werter to town for the spring season, Mr. Holman and Miss Brunton acting the hero and heroine with great success. The manager, who was to be so closely and lastingly connected with the author, then gave him nothing for his tragedy; but when he subsequently added Eloisa (not Abelard's Eloisa, but la nouvelle Heloise) to the list of tragic dramas, then thought himself bound to allow him one night for his benefit — it produced my old friend the striking sum of EIGHT GUINEAS.

It should not be omitted that Mrs. Siddons, in the anxiety after new characters, had stooped to Elwina, in Percy, and something, no doubt, was the result of such accomplishments in the part; but who can get rid of first impressions? The title of this play invariably revives before my eyes the sparkling gaiety of Lewis, his flowing hair in powder, tied by a blue set of streamers; his light summer costume, of no age in the history of man, and all the inimitable flights of tragic passion, which forty years cannot entirely wear down in the memory.

For Mrs. Jordan the search after novelty proved more favourable; *She would and She would not*, offered Hippolita to her talents, and it long continued a very powerful attraction. The other characters in this comedy were admirably cast. King

was the Trappanti ; Parsons the Don Manuel, and Miss Pope the Rosara.

On the 1st of May, Miss Kemble was married to Mr. Twiss, a highly respected friend of her brother's, and retired from the stage. She had struggled with many discouragements in the profession ; but all the admiration, all the zeal, and critical talent of George Steevens failed to impress the public with his own opinion of her powers. At one time it had been expected that his attentions to this accomplished and excellent lady might terminate in their union ; but the commentator was doomed to a life of cheerless celibacy. The social character of that critic would no doubt have been vastly benefited by such an union. Shakspeare might have lost some of that illustration, which Steevens seemed to live only to supply.

Mrs. Pope enacted Zenobia, for her husband's benefit ; and Mr. Harris, who never seriously could think of being without such an actress, engaged her the following season.

On the 15th May, Mrs. Siddons took her second benefit, and acted the character of Ophelia, in Hamlet ; followed by that of the lady in Comus. I remember my anxiety led me early to the doors of the theatre that evening, and her effect in the sweet Ophelia is very distinctly impressed upon me now. There is something in the composition of great genius, which is never suited to common

organs. The language of Shakspeare must be felt to be spoken. It is not here true, that

“ Give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse  
most eloquent music.”

Nothing but absolute strong sense and passion in the performer, with the accompanying person and grace, can hope to do him justice in any thing. Ophelia had usually been consigned to the mere vocalist, who could in addition to the snatches of old tunes, whine out the coherent and incoherent ravings of her lunacy, and not utterly in her manners discredit the declared partiality of the Prince of Denmark. But we had not been accustomed to see such a part sustained, even on a benefit night, by the great actress of the time.

For a *difference* between the Siddons and other actresses of Ophelia, take, first, the affectionate intelligence with which she listened to the counsel of Laertes, touching

“ Prince Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour.”

No countenance but her own could have conveyed all that was expressed in the narrative to her father of Hamlet's sudden appearance in her closet ; or of the exquisitely simple reply afterwards, when he disclaimed all love for her —

“ I was the more deceiv'd.”

But it was in the scene of Ophelia's distraction, that this great woman threw out one of those

transient flashes of design so observable among the insane, conveyed with a look of the utmost subtlety, suddenly assumed, and immediately lost. The passage was this : —

“ *Oph.* — I hope all will be well. We must be patient : but I cannot choose but weep, to think, they should lay him i' the cold ground :

“ *My BROTHER shall know of it —* ”

And then she wandered into thanks for counsel, orders for her coach, and her leave of the sweet ladies, to whom she fancied herself a visitor.

The line which I have printed by itself, as delivered by Mrs. Siddons, was never to be forgotten.

The lady in Comus, perhaps for the first time, spoke the magnificent phrases of Milton as verses of such amazing power demanded to be given : but the piece is essentially undramatic, and Mrs. Siddons, though an admirable declaimer, required passion for the display of her genius. Yet the grandeur of innocence, and the energy of virtuous indignation, became absolutely terrific in the famous address to Comus, v. 792—9.

“ Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinc'd ;  
Yet should I try, the uncontrolled worth  
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits  
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,  
That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize,  
And the brute earth would lend her nerves, and shake,  
Till all thy magic structures rear'd so high,  
Were shatter'd into heaps o'er thy false head.”

Although I cannot think Comus fitted to a public stage, and that noisy unreflecting thing, a mixed audience ; yet among the decorous retinue of a great baron, acted by the juvenile talent of his family, on some occasional festivity, I can conceive no display so graceful or instructive ; and to the present hour, the Masque of Comus has more ennobled the ruins of Ludlow Castle, than the recorded honours of all the lords presidents of Wales, who there held for ages their solemn and splendid courts of the marches.

## CHAP. XIII.

HAYMARKET. — MR. COLMAN ATTACKED IN THE NEWS-PAPER. — HIS PROLOGUE. — MRS BADDELEY DIES. — FEMALE MACHEATH AND FALSTAFF. — MRS. BROOKS. — DISBANDED OFFICER. — MRS. JORDAN AT EDINBURGH. — HER VERSES. — WINTER SEASON OF 1786-7. — RIVAL RICHARD CŒUR DE LION. — RYDER AT COVENT GARDEN. — DEATH OF PRINCESS AMELIA SHUTS THE THEATRES. — PRESENTIMENTS OF DEATH. — WEST DIGGES DIES. — DODSLEY'S CLEONE. — LADY OF FASHION. — ANECDOTE. — MRS. COWLEY. — PILON. — MISS PRUE. — REYNOLDS'S ELOISA. — MRS. SIDDONS IN IMOGEN. — MR. KEMBLE'S POSTHUMUS. — ITS EXCELLENCE. — R. P. KNIGHT. — SUCH THINGS ARE. — ROXALANA. — DEATH OF BRERETON. — COUNT OF NARBONNE. — SEDUCTION. — LADY RESTLESS. — JEPHSON'S JULIA. — MR. KELLY. — HIS POWERS. — MRS. CROUCH. — SOCIETY AT HER HOUSE. — MRS. YATES DIES. — MRS. SIDDONS IN ALICIA. — POOR HEWERDINE. — PROFESSOR PORSON. — HIS MEMORY. — ORIGINAL ANECDOTE.

THE Haymarket Theatre opened on the 9th of June, with a prologue, written by Mr. Colman, delivered by Mr. Bensley. It seemed to have no other object than to repel a malignant insinuation in the Public Advertiser, that his mind and body had been smitten together. He therefore

announced that he was "alive in very spite of his physician." There was an unfortunate reference in it to Le-sage's Archbishop, in the following tuneless couplet :

"Till apoplex'd at last, his congregation  
Smelt apoplexy in each dull oration."

His allusion to Foote, however, though labouring in its expression, faintly vindicated his claim as a writer of pointed verse.

"Fam'd Pasquin, his applauded predecessor,  
'Gainst wit and humour, never a transgressor,  
Still cheer'd your vacant hour with jest and whim :  
When hapless Chance depriv'd him of a limb ;  
But you, who long enjoy'd the tree's full shade,  
Cherish'd the *pollard*, and were well repaid."

The reader will, perhaps, recollect the amateur performance of Dr. Stratford's Lord Russel, at Drury Lane, in 1784. The actors seem to have been deeply inoculated, and the disorder kept *coming out* occasionally in different places. But I did not attend the performance of Mr. Lawrence in Philaster, with Mrs. Jordan ; and I shall pass over Mr. Horne this summer, in Hastings, at the little theatre. Shore was followed by a new farce from the pen of the ingenious Mrs. Inchbald, called the *Widow's Vow*.

On the 1st of July, that beautiful, but unthinking, woman, Mrs. Baddeley, died at Edinburgh.



Her errors were too gross for even the stage to palliate ; and they led her through profusion to embarrassment, and it was believed to hasten her death at last, by taking laudanum. Some general notion of her countenance and figure may be derived from Zoffani's picture of King and others, in the *Clandestine Marriage*. The adorable Fanny is Mrs. Baddeley ; the Canton, at a *proper* distance, is her husband. For the chance of doing a little good, I press the fate of this "*inspired idiot*" upon the reflection of one lady on the modern stage ; and satisfy myself with leaving the caution thus enigmatical. The little manager allowed his theatre to be disgraced this season, by two of those vile and beastly transformations, which indelicacy seldom parallels. A lady (Mrs. Edwards) absolutely made her *first appearance* on any stage, in the dissolute highwayman, Macheath ; and Mrs. Webb exhibited *herself* in the dress of Falstaff, and sustained the character, word for word, through the first part of Henry IV.

After a record of such grossness, it is pleasing to notice the appearance of Mrs. Brooks, in Lady Townley. Her countenance was beautiful, and its expression refined ; her person elegant, and distinguished for its graceful ease. But the voice was thin and weak ; could that have been strengthened much by art and practice, the stage had then almost acquired a representative of Miss Farren.

The 24th of July presented an importation from the German theatre, to which we have since been so alarmingly accustomed. A Mr. James Johnstone gave it an English dress from the German original of Lessing. Something could not but be effected by the talent of Miss Farren, Mrs. Bulkeley, and Mrs. Inchbald, of the one sex; and such performers as Palmer, John Bannister, Parsons, Wewitzer, and Baddeley, of the other. The *Disbanded Officer* lived for nine nights.

As London did not offer much attraction this summer, I shall be excused for noticing the benefit of Mrs. Jordan at Edinburgh, on the 6th of August. After acting Letitia Hardy in the Belle's Stratagem, she spoke an address, written, as it seems, by herself, and pleasant enough to do her credit.

“ Tis true, such *planets* sparkled here,  
As made me tremble to appear ;  
A twinkling star, just come in sight,  
Which tow’rds the *pole* might give no light.”

But as she proceeded, I think there appeared some mark of personal displeasure toward the queen of tragedy. The reader of the following lines may gather, and surmise.

“ *Melpomene* had made such work,  
Reigning despotic like the *Turk*,  
I fear’d *Thalia* had no chance,  
Her laughing standard to advance ;

But yet her youngest ensign, I,  
Took courage, was resolved to try,  
And stand the hazard of the *die*." }

As I think I am quite certain of the *tone* in which she delivered this allusion, so I can have no doubt of the effect of it. An irruption had been made into the very capital of the solemn empire, and the monarchy, which had been absolute, was now limited, if not divided. The Jordan rather too evidently enjoyed her triumph.

The winter season of 1786-7 opened on the 16th and 18th of September, and nothing remarkable occurred, at either house, until both theatres produced their rival versions of M. Sedaine's *Richard Cœur de Lion*, which had been set by M. Gretry, in a manner so beautiful, expressive, and impassioned, as to beget a question, whether, after all the disparagement of French opera, our neighbours had not come nearer than their rivals, in rendering music, as an imitative art, a faithful interpreter of nature.

It had excited a perfect delirium of loyalty in Paris, when brought out in 1784. An observer of the surface only, would have pronounced the revolution of 1789, an impossibility. *Richard*, like *Henri Quatre*, is one of those dramas, in which the affection of the people for a virtuous prince, finds aliment in every scene. *Mac Nally's* at *Covent Garden*, produced no effect at all. *General Burgoyne's* taste and skill rendered the

after-piece at Drury Lane a permanent property for the theatre. By throwing the interest of Blondel into the character of Matilda, the translator made a provision for the gratification of the ladies, which the original author had neglected; or imagined too strong a deviation from Millot's narrative of Richard's captivity. Though no singer, Mr. Kemble did contrive to reply to Matilda's strain, and the spectators enjoyed the sight of his noble figure, pacing his melancholy exercise within the walls of his prison. The whole piece was carefully and perfectly acted. The happiest exertion of vocal power was unquestionably with Mrs. Bland; a singer of so much sweetness, taste, and truth, however confined as to her range, or peculiar as to her style, that I hold her, in music, to be like Lafontaine in fable, unique, and unapproachable.

Mr. Harris had not been insensible to the loss of Henderson. He had engaged Mr. Ryder, from Dublin, to take, at least, a *part* of the business sustained by that universal actor. Mr. Ryder was an able, but a hard, an accurate, but a coarse performer. He could act Iago, and Falstaff, and Sir John Brute; and perhaps these three points comprehended all that he could fairly bring within the reach of his powers. When the immense circle of his predecessor is contemplated, old enough for Lear, young enough for Hamlet, mellow enough for Falstaff, tart enough for Bene-

dick, the jovial Comus, the deadly Iago, the Sir Charles Easy, or the Sir John Brute, the Roman Father, or the Malvolio ; a manager must have been happy in Mr. Ryder's assistance to fill so great a chasm. His Sir John Brute seemed to have altogether forgotten his *title* ; with that single exception, I know of no fault that could be found in it. Mr. Ryder had studied his profession, and was a master of it, according to his standard of power.

The death of her Royal Highness the Princess Amelia, which happened on the 31st of October, closed the theatres from the 1st to the 13th of November. There was no particular excitement, more than that of a splendid funeral, attendant upon the death of a royal maiden of '75, who had lived in retirement either at Gunnersbury, or in the house which is now Watson Taylor's in Cavendish Square. At that advanced age, Walpole wrote verses in her praise, and she replied to him in prose neatly and unaffectedly. She left the bulk of her property to her German nephews, the Princes of Hesse, after some very considerable legacies to the ladies upon her establishment.

If the genius of history, in the pages of Tacitus, turned aside occasionally to notice a prodigy or a presentiment, I shall be forgiven, while the theatre remains closed, for mentioning one foreboding which attended the Princess Amelia. She uniformly expressed her belief, that the month of

October would be fatal to her. Her father, George the Second, died on the 25th of that month, and her brother, the great Duke of Cumberland, on the 31st. Her Royal Highness also died on the last day of the month. Such a man as Sir Kenelm Digby would have turned his mind loose among the sympathies of collateral beings, and thought such coincidences natural, perhaps necessary. The scepticism of the modern philosopher leads him solely to consider how far such prepossessions, solemnly entertained, may enfeeble the frame, and thus contribute to their own fulfilment. His present Majesty, then Prince of Wales, frequently graced the festivities of Gunnersbury. The Princess played her pool of commerce to the last, and delighted in the happiness of youth, which she wanted neither temper nor skill to promote.

While the theatre thus missed its usual supporters, it, on the 10th of November, lost one of its striking ornaments by the death of West Digges. I view him "but rather like a dream than an assurance that my remembrance warrants" as sturdy as Cooke, but more pathetic, steady, and refined. If I do not deceive myself, his Caratach in Fletcher's Bonduca was to be mentioned among the unexpected felicities of performance, where the actor seems identical with the character, and impresses for ever upon it his own peculiar manner, as the only mode by which it can be justly conveyed.

Dodsley's tragedy of Cleone was revived on the

22d of the month for Mrs. Siddons. I did not see it on either of the two nights performance. The subject had in his youth been selected by Pope ; and he had composed a tragedy, after his fashion at the time, which in his riper years he fortunately destroyed. In the year 1758, Dodsley, by his friend Garrick, turned over to Covent Garden, brought out his Cleone with the most unequalled success. Miss Bellamy is stated in the heroine to have rivalled the sorrows of Mrs. Cibber. When the principal incident is understood to be the agonized ravings of a mother over her murdered child, and that mother was to be performed by Mrs. Siddons, the only question must be whether the distress were not too intense for endurance ? I should think this must have been the case ; for Dodsley certainly has written his play with great feeling, and close enough in its expression to the genuine language of the passions. An anecdote was many years ago current, that a lady of fashion once asked Mrs. Siddons in what way she judged, as to a new character, whether it were worthy of her pains ? The great actress replied, that “ if upon reading it the part appeared to be “ written *in nature*, she never doubted that something might be made of it.” A surer test than this could not be selected, nor one better calculated to confine her studies to the writers of former times.

Mrs. Cowley, on the 25th, produced a comedy called “ The School for Greybeards,” which was

in great danger on the first night, but, after a revision, which engaged the fair author ten days, was again acted, and took its run agreeably enough, though never attaining the usual popularity of her muse. There seemed to have been an apprehension, that in looking to Mrs. Behn for some of the incidents of her play, a few of the impurities of that writer had left a tinge upon her dialogue. Both ladies express equal astonishment at the *free* imputation.

At the other house, on the 18th, Mr. Pilon met with the most complete success in his comedy, called "He would be a Soldier," which started under the decided dislike of so accurate a critic as Mr. Colman. The interest was none of the newest; — a father embarking for India leaves his infant son to the care of an innkeeper, with instructions to make him pass for his own: the result of course is, that his own booby progeny is really passed off upon the long-absent gentleman, on his return to his native land. The disclosure of the deceit puts an end to the comedy. Pilon had a readiness of talent, but this was the only play he finished. He was one of the large class, who, feeling in themselves the indications of mental power, disdain the fetters of any regular profession, and determine to instruct or amuse the world by their wisdom or their wit. He attempted the stage as an actor, and failed; as an author he may be said to have been successful — but his success yielded no steady pro-



vision for the day that was passing over him, and he was besides improvident, convivial, and careless. He lived a life of embarrassment, and died within a year, after his union with an amiable woman and the arrangement of his affairs began to brighten the prospect before him.

*He would be a Soldier* was deeply indebted to the actors for its success. Mrs. Pope had returned and played his heroine; Lewis, Quick, Edwin and Aickin zealously supported their respective parts, and the piece was the greatest attraction of Covent Garden during the season.

December 11, Mrs. Jordan added Miss Prue to her list of sprightly characters; but the Country Girl, through life, continued the prime attraction of the actress. Nothing but the force of first impressions will account for other cases of this sort; but the Country Girl, as a full piece, certainly contained most of what Mrs. Jordan was born to do. In after-pieces the Nell seemed to me transcendant.

On the 20th, Reynolds gave his second tragedy, *Eloisa*, to which I have before alluded; and on the third night had the memorable benefit, which would have deterred any mind but his own from dramatic composition. But he had a perseverance that nothing could discourage, and, though writing always with great labour, doggedly wrote on, until he became one of the greatest acquisitions to the modern stage.

The benefits of Mrs. Siddons usually presented some interesting novelty to the public ; her first night, the 29th January, 1787, she acted Imogen in the really *romantic* drama of Cymbeline. A taste which I will neither censure nor examine on the present occasion calls upon females, who assume the male habit, for a more complete display of the figure, than suits the decorum of a delicate mind. Mrs. Siddons assumed as little of the man as possible ; so that her most powerful scenes were those in the dress of her sex. I have said what was wanting in the Imogen of Mrs. Jordan. In Mrs. Siddons it was all to be seen in the utmost perfection. Her scene with Iachimo, I am satisfied, was never approached. The variety of her manner and expression was quite astonishing : the reluctant reception of the imputations as to her lord's fidelity, the detection of the villainy, the scorn of her virtuous indignation, and the dignity with which she called upon Pisanio, to relieve her from the wretch who had too long "abused her credulous ears," were triumphs even for Mrs. Siddons. I freely admit, that in the scenes of disguise, a form less majestic, while it indicated more fragility, bespoke more sympathy ; and that a figure nearer to that of a boy, would, by increasing the visible probability, have heightened her effect with her brothers in the cave. But I have balanced fairly the *pour et contre*, and preserve a very

lively sense of so exquisite a performance. Mr. Kemble was, by a thousand degrees, the best Posthumus of my time. It was a learned, judicious, and in the fine burst upon Iachimo at the close, a most powerful effort; and such it continued through his theatric life. Among the many excellencies of my departed friend, one, which strongly impresses me at the present moment, was that admirable skill which kept the utmost vehemence from the remotest appearance of rant. His voice, though not what could be considered powerful, was exquisitely modulated through its whole compass; it was never for a moment harsh or out of scale: and this may beget a reasonable surprise at the general applause which has attended *certain* efforts in this difficult art; where the most discordant noises have at times rendered the ear doubtful, whether such sounds could proceed from a human organ. A most enlightened philosopher and acute critic, whom we have recently lost, has an observation on this point so admirable, that I shall beg permission to strengthen myself by his authority.

“ The mere sensual gratification (says R. P. Knight) arising from the melody of an actor’s voice, is a very small part indeed of the pleasure which we receive from the representation of a fine drama: but, nevertheless, if a single note of the voice be absolutely cracked and out of tone, so as to offend and disgust the ear, it will com-

“ pletely destroy the effect of the most skilful  
“ acting, and render all the sublimity and pathos  
“ of the finest tragedy ludicrous.” (*Principles of Taste*, p. 93.)

On the 10th February, Mrs. Inchbald's comedy, called *Such Things are*, established itself as a stock play at Covent Garden Theatre. All the improbabilities of its interest, I mean the European and Christian Sultan and his wife, were allowed under the passport of benevolence, and philanthropy had one more triumph on the stage. This rage of sentiment ended in the massacres of the French revolution in two short years.

15th. I just, in passing, notice the Roxalana of Mrs. Jordan. It certainly fell under the comparative skill of Mrs. Abington; still it was entertaining nonsense.

On the 17th instant died Mr. William Brereton, at the early age of thirty-seven. He had been for some time under confinement at Hoxton. This gentleman had been considered rather serviceable than great, and his tragedy was commonly deemed weak and insipid. But occasion calling upon him to act Jaffier to the Belvidera of Mrs. Siddons, he seemed to have derived a new soul from the collision. The performance was full of tenderness and energy. It was said, that in kindling his imagination the divinity unsettled his reason; but that in clasping the goddess in his embraces, he became too sensible of the charms of the woman.

Madness is commonly preceded by some flight of irregular fancy. Perhaps there was a slight foundation for the superstructure, which inventive gossip ran up in haste at the time. The world (I mean more than the dramatic world) knows, that it was the widow of this gentleman who became, in her second nuptials, the wife of Mr. Kemble; and whose high praise, in the language of her husband, I shall lay before the reader on a very interesting occasion.

On the 8th of March, the Count of Narbonne was revived at Drury Lane for Mrs. Siddons, or rather for Capt. Jephson, from whose pen a new tragedy called *Julia* was shortly expected. This is the common policy of the theatre, and is, therefore, like many other things of custom, presumed to be right from its long continuance. Yet there are strong grounds for doubting its wisdom. The mind of at least modern writers, or rather the manner of composition, is so limited, that such a prelude to novelty is more likely to injure the new piece by palpable sameness or perhaps inferiority, than to benefit by familiarizing the judge to the author's style of thought, expression, or structure. For the performance, Mr. Kemble was all that the author himself thought him in the Count. In the Countess, notwithstanding the immense superiority of countenance, I have sometimes doubted whether the Countess of Miss Younge from its querulous dejection, its passive gentleness, and in-

tense horror, did not approach nearer to the conception of Jephson.

The author of the Count of Narbonne always seemed to me to have looked too low for a model. He has numerous imitations of Home. The last the strongest.

“ A little while  
Was I a wife ! A mother not so long !” &c.  
DOUGLAS, Act V.

“ I was a wife ; there gasping lies my husband ;  
A mother too ; there breathless lies my child.”  
COUNT OF NARBONNE, Act V.

On the occasion of its revival at Drury Lane, the author published a second edition of his play, corrected, which his friend Mr. Malone saw through the press. It may be proper to add, that Austin was finely acted by Bensley, and that Theodore and Adelaide were sustained by the younger Banister and Mrs. Crouch.

On the 12th, Mr. Holcroft gave to the Drury Land Company the attraction of a regular comedy called *Seduction*. He took credit in an execrable prologue for preserving the unities ; and, indeed, from the nature of his subject he was not tempted to many changes of place. The object was, to show the higher orders how criminal that indifference became which opened their doors to the systematic seducer. Mr. Kemble, of all men, acted a Lord Morden, too fashionable for care about any

thing; Palmer, Sir Frederick Fashion (the seducer); and Miss Farren, the brillante of the comedy, Lady Morden.

Mrs. Siddons was again drawn into comedy for her brother's benefit. He was all his life extremely careless about such matters, and often indeed put up a weak play, when it was in his power to have selected a strong one. Murphy's *All in the Wrong*, on this occasion, exhibited one of the most deliberative, dignified, and impressive women in the world, as Lady Restless. But the impression left by the character was of little value; those who saw it thought, *again*, that the great actress was here a "star disorb'd." I point out these trips in former management as cautions against forcing genius to labour against nature. With the feeling of great power and practice, performers are often led to think, that every thing is possible to their efforts, and that they are excluded from any particular walk by prejudice or timidity. The inimitable Hogarth thus dreamt that the painter of *Marriage à-la-mode* could display the sorrows of Sigismunda; but he had *history* neither in his forms nor the treatment of them; and his work was barely endured, out of veneration for the talent displayed on other occasions.

On the 14th of April, Jephson's much-expected tragedy of Julia was received by a very brilliant audience with suitable applause. It is now completely forgotten, except for the astonishing effect

made by Mr. Kemble in *Mentevole*, a part very truly calculated for his powers. The dark designing subtlety of the Italian, combining with ungovernable passion, produces scenes of deep interest and prodigious force. The language of the poet excited, I remember, a vast deal of false criticism; it was considered by some to be too figurative. But, in conveying the effects of any passion to a cultivated mind, all those artifices which awaken *associations* are allowed to the genuine poet. Mr. Gray, too, met, unfortunately, with a critic of the creeping class in his friend West, who seemed to think that, in using the *painting* expressions of a poetical age, he was writing a play of no distinct time: but there is a mighty difference between a powerful diction, and one that is obsolete. Perhaps in strictness, all that is really essential in dramatic expression never drops into disuse. What a fine rebuke it is to this levelling sort of criticism, to read that Gray conceived himself called on to justify the following admirable resemblances to Shakspeare, in the fragment of his play on the story of Agrippina. “Is he not the *“ silken son of dalliance?”*

“ Things that but whisper'd  
Have arch'd the hearer's brow, and riveted  
His eyes in fearful ecstasy.”

The associations which spring in the hearer's mind from such picturesque expressions as these,



give the most refined delight that poetry can offer to our intellect. Whoever would weaken them is unacquainted with the great resources of the art; he may "*appelle un chat, un CHAT*," but Shakespeare and poetry call the animal, "the green-ey'd monster," the type of jealousy.

The 20th of this month introduced to an English audience Michael Kelly, in the character of Lionel, in the opera of Lionel and Clarissa. I owe it to an intimacy of more than thirty years to say something beyond a common notice of a very kind and friendly man, and a very able and scientific singer. It often happens in music, that the sweetest organ leads to nothing brilliant, and that truth of tone and flexibility, and compass, achieve perfection in the art. Something like this was true of Kelly. His voice had amazing power and steadiness; his compass was extraordinary. In vigorous passages he never cheated the ear with the feeble wailings of falsetto, but sprung upon the ascending fifth with a sustaining energy, that often electrified an audience. Some of my readers will remember an instance of this in the air, sung *only* by himself, "Spirit of my sainted Sire," where the fifth was upon the syllable *saint*. Had he remained only what Michael Arne left him, he might have sung the English ballad as well as other men have given it, and stopt short of becoming really an artist in music; but the Conservatore at Naples, in which he passed five years of his youth, gave him all that

science could add to an original love for the art; and Apprili, the best master of any age, completed the studies of the young musician. He was soon versed in all the intricacies of the Italian conversation pieces and finales, and acquired the reputation upon the continent, of being an excellent tenor. There that intimacy with the Storaces was formed, which ultimately made so great an impression in London, when Stephen Storace, a rough honesty, but a man of fine genius, composed for his sister, as the Buffa of almost Italian operas, and Kelly as the hero, music which gave a new feature to our amusements. The foreign habits of these accomplished singers enabled them to sing steadily, while moving about the stage, (a difficulty of no mean rank,) and infused a life, a bustle into our opera, which before hardly trusted itself with action, but only —

“ Address’d itself to motion, like as it would sing.”

It is not my intention to gratify the appetite for scandal, by any account of the intimacy which Kelly formed with that beautiful woman, Mrs. Crouch. Her husband was the only man who did not seem to value her charms, and I can speak from knowledge, that he was upon the most friendly terms always with Kelly. Mrs. Crouch benefited greatly by his instructions. Their house soon became, after the play, the resort of many of the patrons

of the theatre, and its proprietors. The hospitality was of the gayest kind. Something, in course, was taken by all who sat down, but temperance presided at the board, and the wit, that sparkled like the wine, flowed in just measure, and with good taste. The actress herself sometimes sat at table in the splendid decorations she had worn at the theatre, and so continued an enchantress till she retired to her room from the party. This, perhaps, had something in it of foreign taste; but it was infinitely agreeable. There I have met with those, who indeed gladdened life; and enjoyed the perfection of music, not imposed as a task, but sung from the gratification it afforded the singers, as well as that it gave to the delighted hearers. The reader may add, to this unaffected treat, the occasional surprise of Sheridan, arriving from a late debate, and evincing, that he had a fertility of imagination, which was absolutely inexhaustible. He may expect to find Mr. Kemble, too, in such a party; and there he, in truth, frequently was. Points of management were often settled in five minutes, at such a *rencontre* with Sheridan, that he could not be brought to decide by all the morning solicitations of the parties who besieged his dwelling house. It is true, that what are called the *little hours* stole away imperceptibly in such society; but for this, the guest never had to apologize to either reason, decorum, or good taste.

On the 3d of May died Mrs. Yates, who had been the most graceful actress of her time. The death of Mrs. Cibber in 1766, left her without a rival. I have, I think, noticed the enchanting music of her declamation, and the elegance of her form. Her *Andromache*, and the *monody* upon Garrick's death, are what chiefly adhere to my memory. Mrs. Yates, more than any actress, or woman that I have ever seen, reminded you of classic times. The style of her features was not modern, and she courted a likeness to the statues of antiquity, in the solemn composure of her attitudes. She was the Poussin of the stage.

Davies tells a story of her starting into great notice, by acting *Mandane*, in the *Orphan of China*, during Mrs. Cibber's indisposition; and how she deceived Garrick, at rehearsal, when nearly perfect in the character, by affected ignorance: how, then, Murphy fell keenly to the work of tuition, and, in a week, or ten days, did such wonders, that Garrick saw her success to be probable. The story is inconceivably foolish. Mrs. Yates was not in a condition then, to play tricks with her manager. Nobody at rehearsal affects ignorance, who really has knowledge. If she possessed the power of the part, why delay, and ten days drudgery with Murphy, to be parrotted into his meaning? The truth is, that prejudice in the manager, produces timidity in

the actress. Accident alone, excites the evidence of talent. When Mrs. Siddons, in Lady Anne, trembled at Garrick's Richard, I am quite sure that she did not think herself a great actress.

Had Henderson lived, there was a probability that Mrs. Yates would have joined him, and contributed her declamatory aid to the attraction of his readings. They would, no doubt, have recited select scenes from our best dramatic authors. This arrangement, it is likely, occurred to him upon seeing, in May 1785, how admirably she performed the Duchess of Braganza, for the benefit of the once celebrated Mrs. Bellamy. It would have been impossible to strike out a nobler diversification of Henderson's various talent, than Mrs. Yates could have supplied. The alternations of form, countenance, and sex would have had great value in the exhibition. Old Sheridan, reading after Henderson, was like that unfortunate animal called a dinner-bell, in a certain assembly; a heavy proser, whom nothing but the phlegm of a Dutchman can possibly endure: yet he must be endured, till the great performer has had time for refreshment.

Mrs. Siddons, on the 7th of the month, changed her character in Rowe's very interesting tragedy, Jane Shore. There were critics then, and there always will be, idle enough to justify a mere experiment, and decide against the most obvious propriety. So here, because the terrors of Mrs.

Siddons were indeed great, they asserted, that it would be wise in her to assume the disgusting ingratitude, and the senseless explosions of Alicia, and resign the noble generosity of Shore as to her great betrayer's offspring, and all the gentle sufferings, which, in her matchless expression, produced the most salutary woe, that ever dimmed the eyes of intelligence and beauty. I saw her Alicia; it has passed away like a turbid dream, leaving a pain upon the recollection, not sufficiently defined for expression. But her Shore remains there in all the lonely loveliness of its virtuous poverty; an image superior to the pencil of the artist, and which she alone could excite in the imagination.\*

As the opinion upon the comparative value of the two characters need not be left entirely to my own credit with the reader, I apprehend it will not be very difficult for him to pronounce the following exclamation of Jane Shore, before Glo'ster, superior in value to all the "frantic hair," and "waving floods of blueish fire" that sound like meaning in the mouth of Alicia.

\* I shall not scruple to intrude a grammatical remark of some importance, into a record of dramatic excellence. Let the spectator recal here the effect of one short word, in the line uttered by expiring Shore to her husband —

"Forgive me! — BUT forgive me!"

and let him then meditate on the absurdity of defining such a word, an articulate sound having no meaning in itself.

"*J. Shore.* O, that my tongue had every grace of speech,  
Great and commanding as the breath of kings ;  
That I had art and eloquence divine,  
To pay my duty to my master's ashes,  
And plead till death, the cause of innocence."

Kelly has been already noticed on his appearance in Lionel. He had, what I at least thought, a better opportunity in Young Meadows, soon after, of displaying his science and musical expression. The graceful melody of Arne, "O how shall I in language weak," proved Kelly's feeling and taste to be greatly beyond all existing competition. The Rosetta of Mrs. Crouch was, at that time, inferior only to the Rosetta of Mrs. Billington; whose voice, he it observed, was not equally rich, nor her shake equally true: but I have already dilated upon her accomplished and perfect style. She was the greatest of all English singers.

On the 14th of May, one of those irregular humourists, who are the *fiddles* of male societies, and are allowed to exceed all ordinary decorum, for the pleasantry expected, William Hewerdine, acted, for a benefit, Young Philpot in the Citizen, at Covent Garden Theatre; but it was a *misnomer*; all his convivial spirit died away before the large and unaccustomed party, and he was to the last degree flat and unprofitable.

“Where be your gibes now; your jests, your songs? Your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table in a roar? Not one now!”

I have heard poor Hewerdine firing away from his sawcy cock-boat, upon that first rate, Porson; and laughed at the opposition of the *modern* to the *ancient* GREEK. Learning had an irreparable loss in the one, and conviviality in the other. The duller sons of either fashion or business may easily avoid their errors; but up to a certain point, human nature could not be more instructive than Porson, nor entertaining than Hewerdine.

This incidental mention of Porson reminds me of a curious circumstance, as to his prodigious memory. I was dining with him at the house of a mutual friend, when, over wine, a very dull man became outrageous in the praise of Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*. The professor began upon the poem, and recited it, with some occasional accompaniments, of imitations by two moderns, in Ovidian Latin; and, as a perpetual or running commentary, he repeated the Macaronic version, called *Eloisa in dishabille*, which has stolen into print, and been attributed to Porson, as he assured me, erroneously. Our wise friend lost all forbearance at this outrage. “He would not endure such a profanation of the work of an exalted genius.” “He would have satisfaction for the buffoon travesty of his favourite poem.” The man's head



was wrong: but, taking him aside, I did at last hit upon an argument, that charmed away his anger. I asked him, “how he could think it possible  
“ for the professor to undervalue the poem? and  
“ what proof HE could give of his own veneration  
“ for it, equivalent to the committing it so accurately to memory, together with three rival  
“ versions of such different complexions?” Goodman Dull then really laughed away his folly, and returned to table quite reconciled to his master.

## CHAP. XIV.

SUMMER OF 1787. — THE ROYALTY THEATRE. — THE QUESTION STATED. — PALMER BEFORE THE MAGISTRATES. — WHIMSICAL CONDUCT. — COLMAN'S NOVELTIES. — INKLE AND YARICO. — THE VILLAGE LAWYER. — WINTER SEASON OF 1787-8. — KEMBLE ALTERS THE PILGRIM. — DRYDEN'S SPLEEN. — MRS. JORDAN. — MARRIAGE OF MR. KEMBLE TO MR. BRERETON'S WIDOW. — EXCELLENCE OF THAT CHOICE. — BANNISTER. — MRS. INCHBALD AGAIN. — KING AND NO KING. — KING LEAR BY MR. KEMBLE. — FATE OF SPARTA. — CRITICISM. — MRS. COWLEY AND MR. MERRY. — SMITH'S LAST BENEFIT. — GREATHEAD'S REGENT. — MRS. PIOZZI'S HAPPY EPILOGUE. — GRIMALDI. — LADY WALLACE. — THE TON. — MRS. ABINGTON. — BEATRICE. — ANIMAL MAGNETISM. — SINGULAR ANECDOTE. — PALMER RETURNS FROM THE EAST. — MRS. JORDAN IN SIR HARRY WILDAIR. — MRS. SIDDONS IN CLEOPATRA. — PALMER AMUSING IN FALSTAFF. — LEONI, MASTER BRAHAM. — MR. SMITH'S FAREWELL. — GARRICK'S MORE JUDICIOUS. — OLD SHERIDAN. — COLMAN'S WAYS AND MEANS. — MR. KEMBLE'S FATHER ACTS IN LONDON. — THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL IN THE HAY-MARKET.

THE summer of 1787 witnessed an attempt of the elder Palmer to give to the inhabitants of the eastern part of the metropolis that essential luxury, a theatre. The appearance of Garrick among us in

that quarter of the town had left a sort of dramatic longing, which was at length too powerful to be resisted, and, under the approbation of the Lord Lieutenant Governor of the Tower, the first stone of the building was laid on the 26th of December, 1785. The theatre stood very near Well-close Square ; and the usual accompaniments of a play-house, taverns and public-houses, crowded soon about the scite of expected gaiety and profit.

They who think that the playhouse, under proper restrictions, may, from the associations it suggests, become not only an amusement but a lesson, saw a degree of oppression in refusing such a school of morals to that great division of the metropolis, or taxing it with such a personal toil or heavy coach-fare as must be inflicted upon the visitors of the patent theatres.

In examining the matter of a contest, it saves a world of time if we set aside the false pretences of the parties. Palmer thought that the Royalty Theatre, situated in the district of a palace and fortress of the crown, might bid defiance to the monopolizers of the west. He tried to lull the apprehensions of the winter managers by what seemed a summer theatre ; and Colman had been assured by him that he intended his opposition against the winter houses.

The fear of this new star, appearing in the east, suddenly seized upon Messieurs Linley, Harris, and Colman ; and strengthened by sundry acts of

parliament, they determined to support their monopolies, quite deaf to the obvious principle, that their RIGHT was but a *trust* for others ; and that the demands of a growing population could never be comprised in the original intention of their patents. AGAIN, that the reason assigned by Charles the Second, for so benefiting Killegrew and Davenant, was, that a suitable entertainment under their regulation might be provided for his people — such a one in a word as, while it relaxed them from the toils of life, tended sensibly to their improvement in virtue. Whether the king or his advisers reasoned well or ill, is not here the question. Such was the plea on which the exclusive privilege was bestowed ; and the patentees could have no other foundation to rest on. Yet they never supposed it beyond the competence of the magistrates of the Tower Hamlets, to grant a license for some *minor* amusements of a theatre ; they might have tumblers and dancing-dogs, every thing that vitiated taste and debased society. “ All that is contemptible or dangerous shall be yours ; but if you once dare become moral and enlightened, you infringe our exclusive rights, and we, with certain magistrates in our interest, will commit you as rogues and vagabonds.”

Absurdity seldom went greater lengths than on the business of the Royalty. The patentee of Covent Garden wrote to the *public*. Colman addressed the *public* ; and little Quick, too, in the

columns of a newspaper marched in double quick time to the support of Mr. Harris. The latter gentleman, whose advice had been asked by Ryder as to his engaging with Palmer in the summer, replied, "It is impossible that I, or indeed any friend of yours, can approve of your engaging in a theatre that has no legal authority for opening; any magistrate for the county of Middlesex could inform you better." Linley, I believe, did not write any thing upon the subject. He could not be expected to *compose* the existing difference. All the former discords of the western proprietors were resolved into harmony upon the present occasion.

But the players themselves, who, in the way of their profession, thought more of the shadow than the reality, took fire at the insult implied in the musty acts of parliaments so alarmingly quoted in their teeth. They who, in wandering into the haunts of the "king's servants," were wont to be considered as "gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon," now found that, by extending their stroll, they had lost their gentility, and become obnoxious to the treatment, which the sage councils of *better times* empowered a magistracy, who could *not* read, to inflict upon sundry rogues and vagabonds who *could*. Place produced all this mighty difference in the same character. The great moral satirist illustrates the change in question.

“ See the same man, in vigour, in the gout ;  
Alone, in company ; in place, or out ;  
Drunk at a borough, civil at a ball ;  
Friendly at Hackney, faithless at Whitehall.”

The theatre itself was remarkably well constructed for the quarter wherein it stood. Its boxes were few ; its pit commodious, though small ; but its galleries were unusually deep and ample. If the *gods* were ever turbulent in their blest abodes, the want of room was seldom likely to cause their displeasure.

The motto chosen by Palmer had a reference to himself, rather than the purpose of playing, and was therefore faulty. *Vincit qui patitur* ; “ He conquers who endures.” Unless it might be supposed to turn over its application, from the manager, to a presumed *hardy* class of visitors, who, to be sure, constantly ENDURE *much*, and CONQUER *every thing*. He opened his theatre on Wednesday, the 20th of June ; the play-bill is now before me. *As You Like it*, followed by *Miss in her Teens*. Palmer was the Jaques of the play, and the Captain Flash of the farce. His brother William sang the songs of Amiens, and performed Garrick’s character of Fribble. The other names have left nothing whatever upon my mind. I suffered greatly, I remember, by the pressure in entering the house ; and my wishes were sincerely with Palmer during his struggle ; his address through the whole night was admirable : —

“ Young maidens wav’d  
Their kerchiefs, and old women wept for joy.”

But I must not forget to record, that Mr. Braham, then a mere boy, sang between the first and second acts of the comedy. Much as he was admired, perhaps even his pillow, on that evening, did not suggest to him a vision so brilliant, as the fame which he has now realised.

The performances of the night had been for the benefit of the London Hospital. The company had not acted for “hire, gain, or reward.” After the farce Palmer came forward, and read, from a written paper, an address so admirable, that it certainly spoke itself. It ended thus: “Until it is  
“announced, that this house shall be again opened  
“with a new species of entertainment not subject-  
“ing me to danger, I humbly take my leave.”

I have rather strong reasons for thinking, that Arthur Murphy held the pen for Palmer through this business; for the ability of the actor was quite of another kind. And thus ended the attempt to transfer the poetry of Shakspeare, and the whim of Garrick, once more to the eastern side of the metropolis.

While this business was in discussion, the magistrates had summoned Mr. Palmer before them, with the intention of actually committing him, if he did not produce the authority on which he relied for resisting the patent rights of the western

sovereigns. The parties met in an up-stairs room of the tavern, and Palmer's dexterity did not desert him. He assured them, that "the papers" were at his lodgings, but a street's length off; "and if they would allow him, he would go himself for them, and be back in two minutes." To this there was a ready assent on the part of magistracy. Palmer treated the party with his usual bow of humility, turned up the whites of his eyes, and bid "God Almighty bless them for their kindness!" He retired in haste, and shut the door after him: but as the key was outside of it, he very gently turned it in the lock, and without the slightest noise in withdrawing it, put the key into his pocket. The party waited with growing impatience, and time had elapsed beyond all reasonable limit; the bell was rung, that the waiter who, in course, knew Mr. Palmer's lodgings, might tell him "that the magistrates could not sit there much longer, and desired to know what detained him?" The waiter knocked at the door, and begged to be admitted. My learned friend Const, who was in the room, saw the business in a minute; and was, perhaps, not the only man at the table, who laughed heartily at this *stage-door* interruption. A neighbouring locksmith soon after released the party; but Mr. Palmer was to be caught before *he* could be locked up, and that danger for the present, he had effectually averted.

And such a man was Palmer, bursting, as it hap-



pened, into tears or laughter; ready for a supplication or a jest; to use the terms "best friend," or "scoundrel," as he stood on one side of a door or the other. Idle and yet energetic, specious and fallacious, a creature of the moment, adopting hurry and pathos as the means of carrying his point; combined with a personal address, for which I know no name but that of *proud humility*; and you granted what he asked less from the propriety, perhaps, of the request, than from the sense of slight compassion that so grand a figure should condescend to supplicate, and the personal complacency that was implied in having a favour to bestow upon him.

The Royalty Theatre being precluded from the representation of the regular drama, burlettas, interludes of music and dancing, operas, farces, and pantomimes, were proposed; and for these the magistrate's license was imagined to be sufficient. But, upon submitting a case to Bearcroft for his opinion, he was decidedly against the legal right.

"I am of opinion, that no license under the  
" 26th Geo. II. c. 36. can authorise the perform-  
" ance of any entertainments of the kind de-  
" scribed in the query, and falling within the  
" meaning of the 10th Geo., and consequently  
" that the performers in such entertainments will  
" be liable to be proceeded against under the last-  
" mentioned statute and that of 17 Geo. II. I

“ am aware that the practice has been otherwise,  
 “ but I have always thought it illegal.

“ EDWARD BEARCROFT.

“ *Lincoln's Inn, June 29th, 1787.*”

Now this terrible 10th of Geo. II. enacted,  
 “ that no person shall for hire, gain, or reward,  
 “ act, represent, or perform, or cause to be acted,  
 “ &c. &c. any interlude, tragedy, comedy, *play*,  
 “ *farce, or other entertainment of the stage, except*  
 “ under a patent from the crown, or a licence  
 “ from the Lord Chamberlain, as by said act is  
 “ provided.”

To be sure here was a ground of interminable strife in the *construction* of the terms “ other entertainments of the stage.” It might mean either such as are given at all *upon a stage*, or such as have heretofore been so given: it might admit a novel exhibition there, or exclude it altogether. But it was obvious, that what was in the pleasure solely of the sovereign, or of the Lord Chamberlain, was here decidedly favourable to the patentees. An exclusive grant of the crown cannot well be recalled, secured by a royal patent. Its object is little likely to be infringed or frustrated by any rash concession of the Lord Chamberlain. A *stage* monarch shares in the prerogative of sovereigns: at least power will most probably think that he “ can do no wrong,” and confine rather than confirm these *liberties* of the Tower Hamlets.

However, the Royalty continued to represent

pantomimes and musical pieces, of which Don Juan was certainly the best, and Palmer himself "cabin-  
"ed, cribbed, confined," as an actor, sometimes recited Murphy's Tale from Baker's Chronicle; at others, Collins's Ode on the Passions, and lowered himself to become useful. The steady manliness of old Bannister never forsook him: he had besides Lee Lewes, Leoni, Delpini, and the Gibbs; and his bills talked at times, perhaps truly, of visitors from the *west* end of the town.

It appears to me upon a revision of the proceedings, that the conduct of the patentees was on the whole injurious to their permanent interests. I do not think that much of their profit was derived from so remote a part of the town. At first a new theatre might attract partially from their usual audiences, and any striking novelty would tempt curiosity the distance even of three miles: but convenience would always narrow this danger within slender limits, and the eastern theatre must be contented in the main with the spectators in its district. We are then to examine another point; whether it was better to wink at its being a play-house, or drive it into exhibitions of another nature, with which ultimately its visitors might be contented? I should incline on policy, to the former course. It is dangerous to force men into the mysteries of evasion; it is dangerous to try the inventive dexterity of strong interest. While unexamined, your musty titles are secure; time has

sanctified them, and little attention is excited to their original propriety. But persecution on the one side, begets scrutiny on the other, and the exact measure of innovation is at length ascertained. You have then awakened a host of greedy speculators, and new amusements will crowd about you. The adventurers may ultimately fail, but while they keep their houses open, they do the regular theatres nightly mischief. Your staple commodity moreover is apt to tire; the old stock of attraction, your sterling plays, must find either first-rate actors, or expensive embellishments, essential to their repetition. Genius will not always arise, because it is called. In the mean time, your rivals display their showy temptations, and good taste is not a very general quality. You are at last compelled to a competition of their own class, and your great distinction is a nullity. The public mind follows the direction it has been suffered to take; and the drama for which you originally contended, is lost in the unworthy contest.

At the Haymarket this summer, Mr. Colman made one of those hasty attempts to open as early as the 16th of May, without awaiting the close of the winter houses, and he brought out a very sensible actor, of the name of Browne, in the character of Hamlet. This gentleman I presume to have been selected, agreeably to the usual policy of managers, to supply the loss of a parti-

cular kind of merit. Mr. Browne was supposed to be of the school of Henderson. Judgment he did not want, but the fire of genius certainly never blazed forth. If any proof had been required of Henderson's amazing talent, it was afforded by the simple fact, that so able an actor as Browne never approached him.

The experiment of early commencement lasted a week, and the house then closed. On the 11th of the following month, June, it opened again: the great rivals having been pleased to terminate their season.

Mr. Cumberland retained his power as an essayist, much longer than his dramatic talent. A comedy called the Country Attorney, was on the 7th of July very coldly received, and certainly does not merit any particular remark. I may, for the benefit of future dramatists, just point out the absurdity of an author's trying the stale incident of introducing the unknown wife of a son to his father, to captivate him with her accomplishments, and producing a reconciliation, by showing the old gentleman, that his boy has done the very thing which could alone satisfy his father. John Bannister had an early respect for Cumberland, and acted a character called Jack Volatile, with much effort; but the *salt* was not there to make the matter savoury.

Short as these notices must necessarily be, I cannot allow myself to pass over the production

of *Inkle and Yarico*, a comedy with music, by the younger Colman, without testifying the delight with which it was received by all ranks. The interest in some degree was caught from the original tale in the *Spectator*, but carried home to every heart by the happiest skill; and the additional characters, whether solid or whimsical, were so judiciously conceived by their author, and so admirably sustained by their performers, that it is highly probable, this piece will continue to be acted, when many of his more laboured compositions are only known in the closet. So much superior in point of dramatic effect is a piece founded on a simple and well-known story, to the untried inventions of the richest fancy. Although I am fully aware of the amazing difficulty of adding to the stock of admired fictions, it has always seemed to me as much the result of judgment, as necessity, that led our Shakspeare to accept the fables known to his audience, either by popular collections of such matters, or previous dramatic experiment. He knew his power to animate them by character, and amplify them by sentiment.

Bannister jun. gave at his benefit, an interlude called *English Readings*; and, considering Colman's conduct, as to the Royalty, it was not a little singular to find the principal incident, the alarm of the readers at being taken before the magistrates for displaying their talent to the

public without authority. But to do the manager justice, he does make the alarm frighten away the *audience*.

Miss Farren, after *Much Ado about Nothing*, on her own night, in which King acted Benedick to her Beatrice, tried a new musical farce, called the *Test of Love*: it was a test, that certainly never failed her before.

Inkle and Yarico did the theatre the greatest service through the season. It may be as well to preserve the original cast of it. Inkle, Bannister, jun. ; Sir C. Curry, Parsons ; Medium, Baddeley ; Trudge, Edwin : Yarico, Mrs. S. Kemble ; Narcissa, Mrs. Bannister ; Wowski, Miss George, &c.

It was at Edwin's benefit here this season, that the *Village Lawyer* began his English practice. They who remember the effect of the original Scout, and Sheepface, will care little that the piece is from the French, and that it has been questioned, by whom it was rendered into such English as may be found in it. Perhaps Colman, either father or son, might touch upon it ; for it is adapted very successfully to our feeling of far-cical humour.

The winter season of 1787-8, as far as Drury Lane was concerned, showed the greatest feebleness in the management. Mr. King evidently had too little power to enable him either to form a plan, or carry one into effect. He could get nobody in the *property* to attend to him, and

property was certainly essential at every step. He was constantly remonstrating with Sheridan, but without the slightest effect. Money could not be found for the expected decorations; and the strongest company that ever was assembled in a green-room, wanted as much more strength to organize its powers, and preserve its attraction. Kemble made an alteration of the Pilgrim for them; that is, he pruned away the indelicacies, which Beaumont and Fletcher could not, perhaps, *but* leave in their comedy; but which Sir John Vanbrugh ought to have struck out, when he revived the play in 1700, and had the expiring aid of Dryden in the prologue and epilogue, and a secular masque supplied by him. It is melancholy to remark the errors of genius. Dryden printed his almost dying spleen against Sir Richard Blackmore, whom he denominates Quack Marus. It is there we find the often quoted couplet, which records that physician's practice of writing in his chariot, and one wittier still, though more offensive.

“ At leisure hours, in epic song he deals,  
Writes to the rumbling of his coach's wheels,  
Prescribes in haste, and seldom kills by rule,  
But rides triumphant between stool and stool.”

On its present revival, the symmetry of Mrs. Jordan's lower parts was more the theme of praise, than even her new-found talent of beating a drum,



or admirable imitation of an old woman. Yet Julietta really afforded great scope for her inimitable drollery.

On the 8th of December, Mr. Kemble was married to the amiable widow of Mr. Brereton; and never certainly was there an union formed with sounder judgment, as far as permanent happiness was likely to be the result of discretion in the choice. I speak with great tenderness and respect of a lady, from whom I have received so much kindness, when I transiently allude to the nonsense uttered at the time. There were not wanting persons who, as they imagined, found this match inadequate to Mr. Kemble's claims, however it equalled his wishes. There can be little doubt that, if he had much regarded either birth or fortune, both would have eagerly courted his acceptance: but he knew himself, and his profession, too well, to think that a wife for him, should be of a disproportionate or different rank from his own. As to remain an actor was his settled determination, Mr. Kemble knew, that without a perfect familiarity with theatrical habits, a thousand occasions must arise, in which the wife, taken from another sphere, would feel herself unhappy, from causes quite unintentional, and unavoidable. He, therefore, looked about him for quiet manners, steady principle, and gentle temper; and he found these, as they had stood the trial of some distressing circumstances

attendant upon a former union. He proposed himself, therefore, to Mrs. Brereton; and I, upon full knowledge, say, it was fortunate for him that he was accepted. But I do not mean to anticipate here my view of Mr. Kemble in domestic life.

After they were married in the morning, Mrs. Bannister, who accompanied the bride to church, asked where they intended to eat their wedding dinner? My friend had made no particular arrangement on this important occasion, and said, "he did not know; at home he supposed." Mrs. Bannister, upon this information, that they were really disengaged, said if they would honor Mr. Bannister and herself by partaking of their family dinner, in Frith Street, they should feel flattered by such a mark of their regard. Mr. Kemble, who really esteemed Bannister, cheerfully assented. An early dinner was prepared; for both Bannister and Mrs. Kemble acted in the West Indian that evening. Kemble arrived rather tardily; they began even to fear that he would not come; and some surprise, perhaps alarm, crept among the little circle above stairs; when, at last, he was seen very deliberately approaching the door, and good-humour revived upon his entrance. A Miss Guy, a friend of Mrs. Bannister's, dined with them. Soon after the cloth was removed, Mrs. Kemble and Mr. Bannister went off to the theatre, to act the parts of Belcour, and Louisa Dudley,

in the West Indian ; and Gradus and Miss Doiley in *Who's the Dupe?* The play-bills of the day in course did not anticipate, but stiled her Mrs. Brereton. The day following, she was put up as Mrs. Kemble, for Lady Anne, in *Richard III.* ; but it was Smith, and not her own husband, who, in the part of that monster, exclaimed to her so ungallantly,

“ With all my heart — *I hate you.*”

The remainder of the wedding-day is soon told. Kemble sat amusing himself till the evening in the drawing-room, occasionally conversing, but commonly playing with the children in their own way ; and when it grew late, he ordered a coach to take him to the play-house, from which he brought home his wife, to the house in Caroline Street, Bedford Square, which had been prepared for her reception.

A story of a very different nature, as to this day, having been circulated at one time, and even printed since his death, I obtained the preceding from the accurate recollection of my old friend, Bannister ; and as it is a true, so perhaps it may be thought no unamusing sketch of the manners of a man unpretending and plain at most times, and detesting all unnecessary ostentation and importance at any.

At Covent Garden Theatre, on the 15th of

December, a comedy of Mrs. Inchbald's was produced called *All on a Summer's Day*. It failed, and the fair author wrote a letter upon the subject in the newspapers: it stated in very confused terms, that this play "was given to the theatre, contrary to her inclination, and even contrary to her most earnest entreaties." It was, in short, by the mistake of the manager that it was produced; and she really "entertains no suspicion that her advantage was not seriously considered in its production." How Mr. Harris came to be so inflexible, as to yield neither to the author's inclination, nor most earnest entreaties, she has not explained; but his liberal, and even generous conduct to her on many occasions, are asserted with a warmth somewhat at variance with the strange attack upon him, as to the failure before us. With some little experience as an author, I profess, in the face of an admirable likeness of David Garrick, that I never found managers so importunate as to carry away by force, a production, which I had myself condemned, and which had lain in my drawers two years, as "past praying for." Let authors be contented to take their fate as it chances: it is not a subject of vast astonishment, that some efforts of the happiest muse are inferior to others; but as to suspicion about *their* advantage, let them remember, that it never can be the policy of a manager to discredit a successful writer; in the experiment he

loses some *money*, and the time taken in the preparation of failure, which might have ministered to success.

Mr. Harris was sometimes inclined to try his experience of the stage in the alteration of an old play, and he brought out the *King and no King* of Beaumont and Fletcher, on the 14th of January, 1788. There was a time, we are assured by Mr. Colman,

“When Bessus walk’d the stage by Falstaff’s side.”

That time is I fear, fated never to return. Mr. Harris’s alteration was received coldly. Yet after all, the *King and no King* may one day revive from the slumber of an age. Mr. Colman, seconded by such a genius as Powell, made Philaster supply, in his own language, the place even of Hamlet.

The first benefit of Mrs. Siddons was taken on the 21st of January; and Kemble acted, to her Cordelia, the prodigy of dramatic creation, *King Lear*. I have seen him since in the character, but he never again achieved the excellence of that night. Subsequently he was too elaborately aged, and quenched with infirmity the insane fire of the injured father. The curse, as he then uttered it, harrowed up the soul: the gathering himself together, with the hands convulsively clasped, the increasing fervour and rapidity, and the suffocation

of the conclusive words, all evinced consummate skill and original invention. The countenance too was finely made up, and in grandeur approached the *most* awful impersonation of Michael Angelo. It will not be suspected that I speak this profanely. The highest nature, from the pencil of man, must still be a modification of human form. The performance was hailed with delight by many of Mr. Garrick's friends. The truth seems to have been that, in a few points, there was no inferiority; as a whole, nothing ever approached the influence of Garrick in this, which, if I may venture upon a disputed question, I do from my heart and judgment pronounce to be greatly superior as dramatic character, to Hamlet, to Macbeth, to Othello. Mrs. Siddons acted the Cordelia of Tate. The passion for Edgar is an excrescence, but pardonable on the stage, which has endured the restoration of Lear.

On this occasion, 347*l.* 10*s.* was taken at the door, and this was the greatest sum that had ever been taken in that theatre, except at her first benefit, to Lady Macbeth, when 351*l.* was the receipt at the doors. The presents were at all times very considerable; but perhaps no actress before or since ever possessed equal intimacy with fashionable life. To be the friend of Mrs. Siddons, was a distinction that implied fine taste and correct manners.

I copy, from a note now lying before me, the names of literary characters moving in the train of

this great actress : Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Erskine, Mrs. Piozzi, Mr. Greatheed, Horace Walpole, Mr. Malone. Mrs. Siddons herself remains ; but of the ingenious and excellent persons whom I have named ! “ Ha ! no more moving ! — still as the grave.”

The fashion filled the boxes and one half of the pit. To speak technically, a more brilliant house was never seen : the spectators, however, must be taken here exclusively into the account — the mere play-house then seldom changed its appearance ; its form never. I cannot be reconciled to the ruinous outlay of money in the present day. Architecture ! I hear of thousands of pounds expended under the imposing title — I see nothing that merits the name. Misappropriation of ancient structure ! sacred for prophane, temples for play-houses — heaviness without, and glare within. Thus the essential object escapes us, and we accept

“ Trifles for choice matters, — worth a sponge.”

On the 31st of January, a tragedy called the Fate of Sparta, or the Rival Kings, from the pen of Mrs. Cowley, was acted at Drury Lane Theatre. The subject was taken from the Life of Agis, in Plutarch, which had been expanded into a fable of great interest by the dramatic skill of the author. Leonidas and Cleombrotus are kings of Sparta, the latter wedded to the daughter of the former. Through the artifices of Amphares, a disunion of

the two kings is produced, and the son-in-law is expelled. Like Coriolanus, however, he returns for vengeance, with an army of barbarians ; and the city being menaced with destruction, the wife of Cleombrotus, like the mother of Coriolanus, comes forth to endeavour at all events to “ shake his fell purpose.” She passes the guard in the habit of one of the sacred virgins, and has a long interview with her husband, who, by the concealing property of a veil, neither suspects her form nor action to be his wife’s, and still more astonishing, in her speech does not start at the well-known accents of his Chelonice. This Spartan insensibility is at last forcibly dispelled by the removal of the all-concealing veil, and the wife moulds the hero to her purpose.

It is obvious that the situation is one of great improbability. A still stronger objection lies against the sentiments and their garb of expression. The first have none of the character of antiquity ; the second indulges in the flowery prettinesses of a bosom perfectly at its ease. What poetry adds to the common language of passion must at all events be consonant ; otherwise it will excite associations in the hearer at variance with the tone of his mind, and destroy the sympathy it was designed to promote. One instance may be sufficient to exemplify the criticism ; and the author stands so securely on the fame of her comedy, that it will not injure her



reputation to deduce from a forgotten tragedy the principles of more perfect composition.

CLEOMBROTUS (*smiling*).

“ I'd not sought bliss on thrones.  
Thus as a lady would you chide, and this  
Let all the subject world receive as law.  
Let them be taught that in the humble shade, -  
Far from the reach of proud ambition's eye,  
Felicity has rais'd her grassy seat,  
And wantons there with love.  
But, madam, I was born to reign !  
And he so born, feels fires that vulgar souls  
Could not endure. Felicity to us  
Is not a nymph in humble russet clad,  
Sipping the dew-drops from the silver thorn,  
Or weaving flow'rs upon a streamlet's brink—  
Oh, no ! she's SCEPTER'D, and her gifts are CROWNS.”

The two broken lines in the above are marks of carelessness and haste. Hemisticks in classic authors are found from necessity, never from design. The stern laws of quantity sometimes render the supplement nearly hopeless. Accident, in a remarkable instance in Virgil, filled one up in the warmth of recitation. It is needless to add how unsuitable the language quoted is to a Spartan king, with battle raging around him, and uttered to his wife in the scene of her supplication for her father and her country.

I also notice in the general structure of her verse, a want of fullness and weight ; and am apt to think, that she did not try her lines by reciting

them audibly : if she had done so, her ear would have admonished her that more substance and greater flow were essential to public declamation.

Mrs. Siddons produced considerable effect in Chelonicæ; and Barrymore in the traitor Amphares, bustled through treason and murder with vast applause. Kemble took the character of Cleombrotus, without being able to see in it what the fair writer intended should be there ; and I think he never condescended to give the semblance of power where it strictly could not be found.

I have often revolved the question in my mind, “ how far an actor is entitled to play the critic in “ the character he is performing?” If his *judgment* alone be exerted, he is fallible like other men ; — if his *prejudice* enter into the field, it is ruinous to the author. You must at last depend upon him, for not playing false, if he cannot play well ; with this little security that, if other parts make their way before the audience, he may be roused into unexpected exertion, and do that for his own fame, that might never have been done for yours. Let me not in this observation be thought to bear too hard upon the actor : it is only from his feeling, and taste, and knowledge, that you can expect success ; when these unfortunately tell him his part is unnatural, feeble, or ridiculous, what is in his choice ? simply this ; whether to act it as if he thought it admirable, or throw it up altogether, or play it as he thinks it deserves ? By the first,

he tries to deceive the audience ; — by the second, he deserts his station ; — by the last, he confessedly betrays his trust. I must leave the difficulty to the casuist. Cleombrotus, however, could have less hopes of immortality, than his namesake, who, on reading Plato's treatise, jumped into the sea.

Mrs. Cowley at this time occupied a great space in the literature of the country. Besides her dramatic essays, serious and comic, she wrote a great deal in the public prints, and was one of the poetical contributors to a journal called *The World* ; the chief features of which were a more marked reflexion of literary and fashionable existence, than had been displayed by other papers of the day. With an intimate knowledge of both its conductors, I can safely say that much was to be expected from their powers of mind, more from their experience of actual life. They assumed a style utterly unknown in English literature. It seemed always to hint rather than discuss, and to lighten rather than shine. They were at all times entertaining, and often instructive. Their taste, whether we look to morals or intellect, was generally good. Genius, in particular, was followed with a veneration certainly not affected, and the public attention was called, with an authoritative voice, to the claims of conspicuous virtue or conspicuous talent. The eccentricity of style at first perplexed its readers, at last diverted them ; and in aid of its amusement, its politics were conspicuously loyal.

Majesty was treated with affectionate veneration. Mr. Fox, the leader of opposition, was rather systematically discredited; and Sheridan was eternally suggested into a station, which I believe they who best knew him, never for a moment thought him steady enough to fill.

Among the poetical contributors to this paper was Robert Merry, who assumed for a signature to his effusions his association to a foreign academy — Della Crusca. He was always an impassioned, and often eloquent writer; had been living at Florence with Mrs. Piozzi, Mr. Greatheed, and Mr. Parsons; and a volume of much entertainment, printed at Florence in the year 1785, proceeded from their love and cultivation of poetry. Merry was easily induced to indulge his muse on his return to England; and a poetical passion was soon feigned, probably felt, for the accomplished mind of Mrs. Cowley, who replied to him under the signature Anna Matilda. The secret was well kept by the printer, and the parties became known personally by an accidental rencontre at an inn. Merry was an enthusiast in beauty as well as verse; and the proportion of the former to the latter in the lady was less than might be desired: with a rhapsodical farewell, the correspondence closed; which, while it was a secret, had been ascribed, and never formally denied by them, to the brightest geniuses of the age. I remember Sheridan did not discourage the attribution of Merry's share to him.

self; and Mrs. Piozzi was usually asserted to be his correspondent. But the perhaps extreme severity of Mr. Gifford taught the public to visit with derision what they had so ardently admired. The *persons* even of the victims smarted under his lash; and the outrageous passion they affected was ridiculed as false or indecorous. Some censure, too, justly fell upon the very *quality* of their composition: but although a necessity for haste cannot be pleaded in extenuation of defect, since what is not good ought in strictness to be suppressed, yet the demand for diurnal amusement allowing no time for deeper thought or more accurate expression, candour must after all place these writers in the first rank of those “who write with ease.” For some occasional flights, in which might be inferred a deficiency of reverence towards the MOST AWFUL of subjects, if such rant be examined, it will be found so utterly absurd, as scarcely to be worth the labour of serious exposure.

On the 10th of March, Mr. Smith took his farewell benefit at Drury Lane, and the whole of the pit was laid into the boxes to accommodate the large circle of his friends in upper life. There was an immense crowd, and a riot from the intrusion of people into places which others had taken. Mr. Smith, a little warmly, undertook the accommodation of *all* his friends at the “hazard of his life.” On these occasions the heart will always say too much in spite of the understanding. He

acted Macbeth himself, Kemble taking Macduff; Mrs. Siddons performed Lady Macbeth. His farewell address was principally levelled at the taste of the Jockey Club, he was no longer in the tyrant Richard to call "a horse! a horse!"

"But mount white Surry for the Beacon course,"

and enjoy the retirement in the country, which he owed to the bounty of the public. To use his own expression, Mr. Smith had "served thirty-five campaigns under the ablest generals — Barry and Garrick," and now resigned the youthful gaiety of Charles Surface to younger bloods. The farce was *Bon Ton*, in which his old friend Tom King and Miss Farren showed the most perfect knowledge of the art, along with their respect for this gentlemanly actor.

Although I have already given my opinion generally of his talents, a few parting words upon this occasion, while they acknowledge the satisfaction he so frequently gave to me, may perfect the notion I wish to leave of his distinct excellence. He was then, certainly, the most *manly* performer of my time. He gave the completest idea of a warm, generous, and courageous character, and this not assumed, but inherent; reflected from the actor upon the part, rather than imposed by the part upon the actor. In the comedies of Congreve, Farquhar, and Vanbrugh, there has been nothing

since his time endurable. Manly gaiety and frivolity are of different forms; the substitutes of whatever age have looked I confess childish after Smith. The Charles of the School for Scandal died with him. The moderns give, very beautifully I admit, a Charles of the *present day*. For this, in part, we must blame the alteration of our dress, and the consequent familiarity of our manners.

Mr. Smith retired to the enjoyments he had proposed to himself in a country life. He not seldom coursed by letter over the fields of his old achievements; and preserved to a great age his interest in the stage, and his love for those who had formerly been his partners of the scene.

Bertie Greatheed, the intimate friend of Mrs. Piozzi, and of Mrs. Siddons, had bestowed his utmost efforts upon a tragedy called the Regent; and he very skilfully applied himself to produce a part for Kemble exactly suited to his powers. Without detailing the plot, I may remark that interest was carried to agony in the scene where the child of Dianora is shown under the axe to extort the mother's consent to accept the Regent. On the first night the suspense lasted too long; this admitted of correction, and the incident afterwards excited only *momentary* terror. The point when the terrible becomes horrible, if not discerned in the closet by the author, will be strongly marked always by the feelings of an audience. On the second night of the Regent, Mrs. Siddons became

too ill to support the character of Dianora, and the third night of the play stood over, unfortunately, to the 26th of April. A greater misfortune could not possibly befall an author. Mrs. Piozzi, with that brilliant readiness that distinguished her, found in the seat of Greathed (Guy's Cliff), the ready means of coming at Shakspeare, and Mrs. Siddons gave the most enchanting effect to the following happy allusion in the Epilogue :—

“While Shakspeare's tomb o'erlooks the plain below,  
Where Avon's consecrated waters flow ;     .  
So long, so clear, BRITANNIA's *fame* shall last,  
For strength of nature, and for truth of taste !  
Warm'd yet unscorch'd by *Plut*ebus' friendly ray,  
Verdant our meads, unfading is our Bay !  
Nor shall this PRIMROSE I present to-night,  
Pluck'd from fair Avon's brink—though PALE WITH FRIGHT,  
Be deem'd inferior to a GALLICK LAUREL,  
If, Ladies, you'll assert your country's quarrel.”

The succession of new plays obliged me to delay the notice of Grimaldi's death, which occurred on the 14th of March. In broad humour he fully equalled his son, who has given such infinite delight to the present generation. In the observation of those minute peculiarities, which are characteristic of our nature from infancy to age, our friend Joe has the discernment of a philosopher, and the truth of a mirror.

Kelly had at length brought his manner nearer to the style of the English performance, and grew



daily into favour with the town. On the night of his benefit, 7th April, he prevailed upon Madame Mara to act Mandane in Artaxerxes, and her efforts in the airs excited astonishment : nothing so perfect had ever been heard on our stage. Mrs. Crouch threw great interest into Arbaces; and Kelly bustled through Artabanes, to an immense house.

On the following evening, at Covent Garden, a comedy called the Ton, was imperfectly played, and unfavourably received : it was the avowed production of Lady Wallace. The object of the play was to expose the follies of fashion — husbands attached to anything but their wives — bubbles too at play — in short, every way bubbles. The stern breath of criticism blew them to their trial, and they were *out*. This comedy boasted the very flattering distinction of a Prologue by Jekyll. I preserve its pleasantry.

“ The *country justice*, with terrific frown,  
 May scare a district, or appal a town ;  
 May hurl dire vengeance on a guilty elf,  
 Who dares to do — *just what he does himself* ;  
 But who shall rule the JUSTICE ? who shall dare  
 To tell his Worship that He must not swear ?  
 Drive him to *church*, prohibit his diversions,  
 Or fine him well, for *Sabbath days excursions* ? ”

Mrs. Abington had been exhibiting, at Covent Garden Theatre through the season, the still admirable remains of what I always thought the purest comic acting that I have ever seen. For her bene-

fit this season she acted Beatrice, a part for which she was peculiarly qualified. In passing over the long series of her performances, this always seems to press itself forward in my memory as a perfect thing. For her farce she took the delightful *High Life below Stairs*, and acted, for the first time, the part of Kitty, rendered a source of endless amusement by Miss Pope at the other theatre. I said formerly, when speaking of Dodd, that he was so essentially genteel, that his airs did not at all seem the cast graces of his master. Compared with Miss Pope, the same criticism was excited by Mrs. Abington. She was the lady of the house *romping* among her servants. A long experience enables me, I think, to state decidedly, that the perfect representation of refinement and vulgarity never belongs to one actress. The domestics of Mrs. Abington had too much of the lady. The fashionable woman of Mrs. Jordan had always some *tang* of the country girl.

The stage, in holding the mirror up to nature, opposes the glass of comedy, capable of reflecting a multitude as they are ; or a magnifier which enlarges a single object into the ridiculous of farce. Mrs. Inchbald, capable of both, devoted to farce the impudent absurdity of animal magnetism. One of our follies is so soon blotted out by another, that there are not many among us aware of the full extravagance of this pretended science. Its power over the nerves of weak subjects must be admitted

to be real; but the fancy of the patient was more operant than the action of the doctor's hands; and let it be remembered that he usually selected the subject for the crisis. Faith in him was, perhaps, more essential than good works. To give an instance of the total delusion under which the true believers laboured, I shall here repeat a story told me by a great artist, sitting in his study, with the works of Jacob Behmen lying before him. "His wife one day, he said, came home from a morning visit, and on her coming into his room, presented him with the most beautiful bouquet of flowers, that he had ever seen arranged. Delighted with their forms and the harmony of their blended hues, he raised them to his nose to enjoy their perfume: they had none. In the utmost astonishment he remarked the circumstance to his lady. 'My dear, these flowers are without scent!' 'They are so,' she replied, 'at present; but the scent may be restored.' 'How, in the name of Heaven?' exclaimed the husband. 'Thus,' replied the wife, simply taking the nosegay from his hand into her own, and with a slight compressure instantly returning it. Nothing, said the artist, ever was more reviving than the perfume now exhaled from these flowers. 'And from whom, my dear, did you derive this miraculous power?' 'From Dr. De Mainauduc.' 'You have then been received?' 'I have, and you will be so too: the doctor is aware that you will desire

“it.” “And shall I obtain this power also?” “This  
“is NOTHING to the powers with which you will be  
“invested.””

Methinks I hear the reader demand, “Was this gentleman in his senses?” I answer, no man could converse more elegantly, and rationally, and piously. “Did he himself believe the story he had been telling?” I am sure he did. I have inserted it here as a very striking instance of utter delusion. I recollect nothing in the farce so characteristic of the mystical pretensions of the great juggler.

Among the agreeable events of the month, Palmer, who, if not a great actor, was unquestionably an actor of the greatest use, returned to Drury Lane Theatre, and performed on the 25th his own Sir Toby in Twelfth Night. The generous sympathy of the audience expressed itself in shouts of welcome. Sorrow for his failure in the east, joy in his return to the west. Barrymore had for some time been his substitute, and had evinced considerable improvement.

But I will not refuse to the reader what passed, on this occasion, *behind* the curtain.

The return of Palmer again to Drury, was a subject of infinite importance, in a theatrical point of view, both to himself and Sheridan. The meeting between these men of *address* was therefore expected to produce something remarkable. Palmer made quite a scene of it. After his profound bow, he approached the author of the School for Scandal,

with an air of penitent humility ; his head declined, the whites of his eyes turned upwards, his hands clasped together, and his whole air exactly that of *Joseph Surface* before Sir Peter Teazle. He began thus —

“ My dear Mr. Sheridan, if you could but know what I feel at this moment — HERE (*laying one hand upon his heart,*)

Sheridan, with inimitable readiness, stopped him.

“ Why JACK ! you forget *I wrote it.*”

Palmer in telling the story himself, added, that the manager’s wit cost him something ; for, said he, “ I made him add THREE pounds per week to “ the salary I had before my *desertion.*”

To a friend, who complimented him one day upon his *address*, over their wine, Palmer disclaimed the possession of that quality in any *remarkable* degree. “ No,” said he, “ I really don’t “ give myself the credit of being so irresistible as “ you have fancied me. There is, however, *one* “ thing in the way of *address*, that I think I *am* “ able to do. Whenever I am *arrested*, I think I “ can always persuade the sheriff’s officer — to “ *bail me !*”

The reader will allow, in the way of *miracle*, Prince Hohenlohe to be a performer greatly *inferior* to Palmer.

In the arrangement of benefits this season, Mrs. Jordan had Friday the 2d of May, and Mrs. Siddons, Monday the 5th. The former acted Sir

Harry Wildair in the *Constant Couple*, and the days of Woffington in some measure returned. Her little air upon her entrance, and the spouting Roxana and Statira formed the best apology for acting the character. What, truly, can any female effect in Sir Harry compared with such an actor as Lewis? There was one gracefully pleasing event when the curtain fell; Mrs. Jordan came herself forward, and with the most respectful interest gave out the benefit of Mrs. Siddons. She then withdrew to dress for her original part of Matilda in the lovely entertainment of Richard Cœur de Lion.

Mrs. Siddons then acted Dryden's *All for Love*. The tide had not set so strongly towards Shakspeare at that time as it has since done; nor had Kemble so completely identified himself with the Roman character. The freedom and variety of Shakspeare's play call in Cleopatra for an actress as majestic as Siddons, and playful as Jordan herself. It is a character, perhaps, more suggested than shown. The mind is so crowded with the reports of her voluptuous exhibition on the Cydnus, her assumption of the mantle and sword of Antony, her agility, carelessly exhibited in the public streets, and her panting for breath becoming as much a charm as her imitation of Venus, that what she has really to say and do in the face of the audience falls below expectation. Yet there are some points of transition from idleness to earnest interest, wor-

thy of the greatest powers. One instance I claim permission to quote. Cleopatra to Antony.

“Courteous lord, one word.

Sir, you and I must part,—but that’s not it :

Sir, you and I have lov’d,—but there’s not it ;

That you know well :

Your honour calls you hence ;

Therefore be deaf to my unpitied folly,

And all the gods go with you ! upon your sword

Sit laurell’d victory ! and smooth success

Be strew’d before your feet.”

From a being of such endless captivation, what man could ever break ? Were Madame Catalani an English actress, retaining her powers, such as she has sometime wasted them on the dialogue of Italian operas, serious and comic, *she* alone, I think, might realize the idea formed of Cleopatra by Shakspeare. I may have said this before, for I have long thought it.

The excellence of Mrs. Siddons was nearly as much lost in Dryden’s Cleopatra, as in the Catharine of the Farce to Kemble’s Petruchio. Among her illustrious host on this night were M. de Calonne and Gibbon, to be now added to the mortuary list before given, over whom it was impossible to suppress an involuntary exclamation.

Upon a former occasion I mentioned the failures in the performance of Falstaff. However it was achieved, Mr. Palmer gave an amusing copy of the great original. He acted Sir John for Fosbrook’s

benefit on the 21st of May, in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*. His habitual gaiety and voluptuous expression did much, and the self-possession and trick of the scene perhaps more, on this occasion. There was a swagger of importance and sufficiency too about it, that sat more naturally upon him, than upon any of his competitors, and he fell into the successive traps laid for him by the women as much from sensuality as avarice.

The bill at Covent Garden on the 2d of June, for Leoni's benefit operated as an epistle to the Hebrews, and they crowded to assist a singer whom they so justly admired. Among them was to be numbered the aid of Master Braham, who on that night acted, or rather sang, for him in *Poor Vulcan*. Leoni had little himself as a singer below his falsetto, but that was almost as sweetly toned as the voice of Rubinelli. Its effect resembled the flute part of the organ, with the tremor stop upon it.

Mr. Smith had taken his farewell benefit, but still, as Shakspeare says, "there was some further compliment of leave-taking" between him and the audience. This occurred on the 9th of June, his last performance for the house. His address to the audience should be preserved, if merely for the purpose of ascertaining the variations of which such things are susceptible.

" LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

" AFTER having devoted five and thirty years to  
" your service, I now beg leave to retire.



" You have received me with candour, indulgence, and generosity. You believe, I hope, your kindness is not lost on me.

" Actors you have had—you will have—with better powers to please you. But this I must be bold to say, none can be found more properly ambitious of your favour—more studious at getting it—more grateful when it was got.

" This is the last time I am to appear before you in my public character.—May I hope the patronage and protection you have vouchsafed me *on the stage*, will be followed by some small esteem when I am off?

" Ladies and Gentlemen—farewell."

There were no tears shed most certainly on either side. To use a happy line, which some way or other Kelly hit upon, when treating of Smith's expression—" there was nothing

" To warm the sterile muscles into soul."

The address itself, too, though perfectly right as to its topics, was much too rigid and pointed in its expression:—" You have had—you will have" — " on the stage — and when off."

The taste of Garrick led him to desert the art of composition, and the trim and balance of a sentence, when acknowledgment was intended to be affecting. Hear him in the paragraph imitated by Smith.

“ I will very readily agree to my successors’  
“ having more skill and ability for their station  
“ than I have; but I defy them all to take more  
“ sincere and more uninterrupted pains for your  
“ favour, or to be more truly sensible of it than is  
“ your humble servant.”

The acclamations of the audience were mingled with their tears. The imitation here is unquestionable; and it will be as little questioned that he who so altered the language conceived that he improved it. The reader of true taste will, however, decide in favour of the unaffected phraseology of Mr. Garrick.

During the summer recess Mr. Sheridan the elder died at Margate, at an advanced age. He had intended, if he recovered strength at all, to proceed to Lisbon; but he was soon proved to be past recovery, and died with the satisfaction of leaving a son to carry the reputation of his family higher than either his father, himself, or his wife, all distinguished for their genius, had been able to carry it. Of his acting I cannot speak. His reading, though harsh, was remarkably accurate, and exemplified his theory in emphasis and pronunciation. The greatest compliment that he ever received was the attention of the late minister, Mr. Pitt. That most admirable orator had in his youth adopted the system of Sheridan, and followed him where many others left him. Mr. Pitt pronounced the word *negociation* as Sheridan directs, *ne-go-sha-*

shun. Like most theorists Mr. Sheridan laid too much stress upon the art which he professed. He might add something of grace or beauty to speech; but the moral efficacy of language is independent of either accent, emphasis, or pronunciation.

After repeated perusal, I am of opinion that his *Life of Swift* is a composition of great merit; but though it may be feared he rates his virtues somewhat too high, and that, upon the whole, the estimate of Dr. Johnson may be the truer, yet I think he establishes the high consideration in which he was held by the political chieftains in Queen Anne's reign; and in fact proves an ascendancy, which, unaccompanied, as it certainly was, by either rank or station, was one of the noblest evidences of mental power in the history of our species.

Bishop Hurd was of opinion, that Addison was a more correct writer than Swift: I think he has himself shown abundant evidence to the contrary. Mr. Sheridan has noted the slips in construction and grammar through his many volumes; but they are not numerous, and of the latter kind some were the *actual* grammar of his day. But he is certainly the best model of pure idiomatical English, and his style is strong without epithets, as the athletic are muscular without flesh.

Mr. Sheridan may, I think, be now and then suspected of depreciating his cotemporaries, to exalt his hero. The days of *little* men he thought had arrived. Such pigmies, I presume, as Dr.

Johnson, Burke, Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon. One must here pity, assuredly, either his blindness or his petulance. Old Mr. Sheridan was the adviser of Mrs. Siddons in the brilliant course of her first town seasons. I have already noticed his kindness as to Mr. Kemble.

I can afford but little space to Colman this summer ; but it would be inexcusable to omit all mention of the younger Colman's *Ways and Means*. The scene is laid in the Ship Inn at Dover, and pleasanter people never were there assembled. Sir David Dunder, acted by the younger Bantister, was a very delightful sketch of a class of beings, who talk incessantly, and about every thing, and are impatient of interruption, which they can only cut down by affecting to know what others are desirous to say. The critics of the time censured the *bare* allusions in one scene, which they praised in another. The author took his revenge, for what he called 'malice and misrepresentation,' in his preface, but he might have let the town remain in ignorance that he had enemies ; unless they might be presumed to exist from his merits.

" Envy will merit, as its shade, pursue ;  
But, like a shadow, proves the substance true."

The father of Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, notwithstanding the march of time upon him, still retained sufficient force to act for the benefit of his son Stephen's wife. He performed the Miller of

Mansfield with very superior effect, and needed nothing of his children's merit to give currency to his own. The house seemed to gaze upon him with reverence.

Miss Farren, although obliged to borrow the aid of King for the purpose, got up the *School for Scandal*, at the Summer Theatre, on the night of her benefit. The cast did not fluctuate much. Mrs. Inchbald, however, stumbled upon Lady Sneerwell; and John Bannister did his best in Charles Surface. The Richmonds, Damers, Conways, and so on, showed their admiration by their presence. As to her friends, this delightful actress might very early indeed apply the Derby motto, *Sans changer*.

## BOOK THE SECOND.

FROM MR. KEMBLE'S BECOMING MANAGER OF DRURY  
LANE TO HIS RETIREMENT FROM THAT THEATRE.

## CHAPTER I.

SEASON OF 1788-9. — NO ARRANGEMENTS SETTLED AT D. L.  
—MR. KING, HIS NONDESCRIPT SITUATION, DISCONTENT  
AND FLIGHT. — ADDRESSES THE PUBLIC. — THE PROPRIETORS  
CONCLUDE WITH MR. KEMBLE. — SHORT ADDRESS  
ALSO FROM HIM. — MR. SHERIDAN. — WARREN HASTINGS.  
— ALARMING INDISPOSITION OF THE KING. — MR. KEMBLE'S  
VIEWS. — HOW SUPPORTED. — ACTS LORD TOWNLEY.  
— IMPROVEMENTS IN MACBETH EXAMINED. — THE  
WITCHES. — MRS. CROUCH CENSURED, PERHAPS IDLY. —  
MR. KEMBLE'S GREAT DISPLAY OF HIS ART. — HIS LEON  
— SCIOLO — MIRABEL — ROMEO — REVIVES HENRY  
EIGHTH. — DR. JOHNSON. — SIDDONS. — TAKES CROMWELL,  
LEAVING WOLSEY TO MR. BENSLEY. — HASTINGS.  
— THE PANNEL. — MRS. JORDAN. — ZANGA. — PRODUCES  
CORIOLANUS.

I AM now arrived at the season of 1788-9, on which, fortunately for the interests of the drama, Mr. Kemble accepted the management of Drury Lane Theatre. During the last season it might have occasionally appeared, even to the audience,

that there was a want of steady systematic controul. Mr. King was rather uneasy at the impression of actual responsibility, where he enjoyed scarcely more than the shadow of power. He had insisted upon quitting his irksome situation, and had been amused by entreaties, and treaties, to remain with more extensive authority. But as Mr. Sheridan so truly taught us in the Critic, "they are always late at that house;" and they literally opened the season without a manager. As the case was peculiar, it may be worth while, from the statement of Mr. King himself, to leave a standing memorial, how a playhouse should *not* be managed. I must abridge his most valuable paper, although in all respects worthy of so able a man. It exhibits a curious picture how tenacious men will sometimes be on the subject of power, which they will neither delegate nor exercise. It is true, that occasionally even during the last season, when there were expectations from a new play, in which Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons were to perform, something in the way of decoration and dress was at last wrung from the proprietors, but there was difficulty in bringing them to the decision; and the unfortunate stage-manager, compelled to ask his instructions at every step, stood like a cypher in the place of an unit, and did nothing of his own motion.

Mr. King, on the 30th of September, at more than two hundred miles distance from London, notices the language of the London newspapers on

the subject of his retreat from Drury Lane Theatre. "One of them allows, that my loss as a performer will be severely felt; but says that neither the public nor proprietors will have cause to regret my absence as a manager. This paragraph I cannot but consider as highly complimentary; for it gives me positive commendation in the line I undertook to fill, and only obliquely censures me for not making the most of a character with which I have never been entrusted."

Mr. King denies that he ever demanded a *thousand* pounds a year, for seven years, in addition to his usual salary as an actor; and handsomely adds, "I have a pleasure in asserting that the quantum of money has *never* been an object of dispute." What he complains of, is the *undefined* nature of his situation, which led him to be called to account by authors for the non-performance of pieces which he never heard of,—to be censured for the non-engagement of actors, with whom he had no power to treat,—and for the paucity of novel entertainment, which it was no part of his province to provide.

Should any one upon hearing this, says Mr. King, ask me, "What was my post at Drury Lane? and if I was not manager, who was?" I should be forced to answer, like my friend Atall in the comedy;—to the first, *I don't know*—and to the last, *I can't tell*. I can only once more positively assert, that I was *not manager*; for I had not the power, by any agreement, nor indeed had I the



“ wish, to approve, or reject, any new dramatic  
 “ work ; the liberty of engaging, encouraging, or  
 “ discharging any one performer, — nor sufficient  
 “ authority to command the cleaning of a coat, or  
 “ adding, by way of decoration, a yard of copper  
 “ lace ; both of which, it must be allowed, were  
 “ often much wanted.”

According to his own idea, he was retained by the proprietors merely to execute their orders in the bringing forward novelties of their choice — to be ready to answer any public call upon the stage — to make the best arrangements he could as to the performance of the stock plays, and to teach such young or old performers as might be likely to derive benefit from his observation and long practice.

When he looked forward, the prospect was not cheering. Mr. Smith had given notice that he should retire — Palmer had other pursuits — Parsons, from bad health, had determined to go to the south of France — and Mr. King feared that those most interested would not exert themselves to supply these deficiencies ; and that all miscarriages would, by the malevolent, be imputed to him. Thus circumstanced, he sent the proprietors an early and formal notice of his determination to retire at the close of the season.

Then were opened the negotiations I have spoken of — then appointments were made without number, and *some* of them kept. Up to the very opening of the theatre, nothing was settled : the

gentleman, who called, always in a hurry, or in a crowd, came to no positive agreement; and the former stage-manager, his patience quite exhausted, wrote a letter to one of the proprietors, to inform him, that he relinquished the treaty in all its parts, and to prevent its renewal, he would leave town instantly, which in fact he did in the course of the day. Mr. King closes with a firm reliance that the step he has taken will not forfeit the public favour.

I have no sort of doubt that the difficulty here felt by the proprietors, was as to the quantity of power to be entrusted. Kemble demanded, no doubt, such a latitude as he deemed essential to his grand objects. King was less peremptory, but yet determined to know his actual authority, and obtain proper credentials from the patentees. The absolute desertion of Mr. King compelled them to accede to the terms of Mr. Kemble, who addressed the public, very shortly after, in explanation of the nature of the task he had undertaken.

*“ To the Public.*

“ I FIND myself arraigned, by an anonymous writer, as having undertaken the management of Drury Lane Theatre under *humiliating restrictions*. I do assure that writer, and the public, that no humiliation degrades my services to those who do me the honour to employ me; and that the power entrusted to me is perfectly satisfactory to my own

feelings, and entirely adequate to the liberal encouragement of poets, of performers, and to the conduct of the whole business of the theatre.

“The public approbation of my humble endeavours in the discharge of my duty will be the constant object of my ambition ; and as far as diligence and assiduity are claims to merit, I trust I shall not be found deficient.

“I am happy to add, that I find myself most fairly and ably supported, by the general zeal and exertions of a company of performers so capable of making the stage a source of pleasure and instruction.

“I am, with the greatest deference,  
the public’s most obliged  
and humble servant,

JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE.

“*Theatre Royal, Drury Lane,*

“Oct. 10, 1788.”

This was the time for “pairs of portraits.” Horne Tooke, in the hope that Pitt would one day, as to reform in parliament, fulfil the promises made in his youth, did him some service, at least excited some clamour, by comparing the lives of Pitt and Fox, and those of their fathers, together. The portraits of the situation of the two rival managers, as drawn by themselves, are in opposition equally striking. Mr. Kemble might enter upon his office with some *hopes*, that the steadiness of purpose,

which he felt to be in himself, might persuade or compel others to be equally consistent. Still he could not but know the junto of proprietors perfectly well; and his, at all times, profound admiration of Sheridan could not prevent him from seeing the character which, as a man of business at least, belonged to him through life — deciding at length rapidly and correctly, but needing a Troy siege to secure his attention. He could not but see, too, that indolent or indifferent as he might be, he was still the only patentee who could or would do any thing. In all such concerns, if more than one man came into action, the second must do mischief. In a theatre, a committee can never manage, unless, in the style of the senate to the Roman emperors, the rest only meet to register the absolute decrees of one.

Now, at this time, Sheridan was playing the game of ambition for the very largest stake. In the impeachment of Warren Hastings, he came forward to blaze with a brightness that should eclipse all ancient, as well as modern, eloquence. His father had published a rhetorical grammar: the son, in Westminster Hall, was to exemplify the whole art of rhetoric, not so much in the hope of convicting that injured man, Mr. Hastings, (for the managers always knew him to be safe,) but as, in fact, the real puppets of the superior policy of Mr. Pitt; who having by *his* India bill robbed them of the patronage of India, delivered over the India

Company to their persecution, so that he might still hold the East under his protection ; while he diverted, by so severe a labour, the talents of opposition from too constant an attention to his own measures as minister. The nabobs, therefore, detested the Opposition for seeking to dry up the streams, that flowed with fortunes to them. The nation saw nothing but personal spleen in the managers, which in its indulgence was to cost them an immense sum of money ; and the sole result, a grand theatrical display in the new theatre of Westminster Hall ; where months of dry evidence were now and then diversified by a day's eloquence on either side, for the amusement of those, who from right or courtesy had the tickets of admission.

Nor was the impeachment the only subject to draw away the attention of Mr. Sheridan from the theatre. The King's alarming indisposition was itself a circumstance to rivet him to the objects of his party. Their Majesties, on Tuesday the 28th of October, had honoured the Countess of Effingham with a morning visit. In the evening the King found himself unwell with a nervous complaint, from which Sir G. Baker thought he might soon recover, but he recommended that His Majesty should not come to town. The nation became soon seriously alarmed ; and the question arose, upon the ascertainment of the King's condition, called the question of the regency ; upon which, in the enforcement of the speculative *right* of the heir-ap-

parent, doctrine repugnant to common sense was affirmed to be the spirit of the British constitution. Mr. Pitt again, upon this question, conducted himself with a prudence, which routed all the forcing claims set up by the Opposition; but the contest was long and arduous, and while the heavier ordinance of the party kept up a constant discharge upon the cabinet, Mr. Sheridan seemed to have assumed to himself the lighter warfare of personal annoyance, and laboured with but indifferent success, though with great address, to irritate the temper of Mr. Pitt. By doing this it was imagined the haughty spirit of the minister might lead him to say something offensive to the illustrious substitute for the Sovereign, and render it impossible for him ever to listen to the claims of Mr. Pitt and his colleagues. The leaders of Opposition were considered to be the personal friends of the Prince of Wales; but they were anxious to take security against the change, which power is apt to create in such attachments.

Thus on every side was Mr. Sheridan forcibly drawn from dramatic objects. For the nightly combats of the House of Commons, the quickness of his mind supplied abundant stores; but the displays upon the India question could not be made without the most elaborate preparation; and though he left the general interest to the zeal and comprehensive grasp of Mr. Burke, yet with Mr. Sheridan's habits it was matter of wonder, how he

could render himself master of the knowledge displayed by him on the Begum charge. He was, for the most part, as accurate as eloquent; but if at this distance of time, I were to fix upon a matter of peculiar praise to him, I should celebrate his *urbanity*. In speaking of actions, he characterised them as they seemed to him; but he never spoke as an enemy: he was a prosecutor, never a persecutor; and good taste in him gave the tone to public duty.

For this digression some apology would be necessary did it not account for the necessity that existed for consigning really to Mr. Kemble very considerable authority in the affairs of Drury Lane Theatre. Any very rash and wasteful encouragement of authors was not to be apprehended from his sound taste and predilection for our ancient drama. On the score of embellishment and propriety some sacrifices must be expected from the treasury, but it was hoped that the attraction would compensate the cost; and that, much as had been done by Mrs. Siddons, her powers would not merely keep but increase their attraction, now that every attendant grace was likely to be supplied by the kindred taste and ample power of her brother.

One great object of Mr. Kemble as a manager was a little to curb the desire of the performers to exhibit in great characters, and get them to concur cheerfully in such a cast of plays, as should exhibit the full strength of the company, and do the utmost

justice to the conceptions of the poet. He had some difficulty at times in carrying these points; and it would be prejudice to suppose that sometimes he did not give reasonable cause for demur; but generally, I believe, he judged rightly as to the fitness of his dramatic subjects; and I am inclined to think that no time ever displayed an equal propriety in the distribution of the business in a theatre. It may be as well to run over the principal strength, whether serious or comic, which came now under the controul of Mr. Kemble.

Mr. Wroughton, Mr. Palmer, Mr. Bensley, Mr. Aickin, Mr. Barrymore, Mr. Packer, Mr. Parsons, Mr. Moody, Mr. Dodd, Mr. Bannister, jun. Mr. Suett, Mr. Baddeley, R. Palmer, Lamash, &c. Mr. Kelly, Mr. Sedgwick, Mr. Dignum, &c. And of Ladies: Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Ward, Mrs. Goodall — Miss Farren, Miss Pope, Mrs. Jordan, Mrs. Kemble, Mrs. Hopkins, Mrs. Crouch, Romanzini, Miss Decamp, &c. &c.

The retirement of Smith had left a variety of parts open to Mr. Kemble, for some, if not all, of which his provincial studies must have sufficiently prepared him. One of these was Cibber's Lord Townley, I say Cibber's, because the pith and marrow of that amazing achievement, *The Provoked Husband*, may be seen by the books not to have been Vanbrugh's. There is hardly a character in the drama of recent times to which Mr. Kemble was naturally more suited than that of Lord Town-



ley; and indeed it always struck me to be in the highest degree masterly in conception and execution. In his angry expostulation with Lady Townley, the sudden change of manner to preserve decorum and even concealment of his intentions before the servant who entered, was one of the happiest points that I remember. But the passage itself is inimitably fine, and must be set before the reader :

“ *Lord Town.* This house you sleep no more in! Tho’ your content might grossly feed upon the dishonour of a husband, yet my desires would starve upon the *features* of a wife —

“ *Lady T.* If we had never met, my lord, I had not broke my heart for it! but have a care! I may not, perhaps, be so easily recall’d as you imagine.

“ *Lord Town.* Recall’d!                      Who’s there?

*Enter a Servant.*

Desire my sister and Mr. Manly to walk up.”

The subtle distinction above upon the mere *features*, of what should be a living soul also of truth and tenderness, was too fine for a mixed audience; but they seemed to be struck as with surprise at the latter point, and deliberately gave it the most sensible applause — for that uncertain criterion of acting often betrays itself to be prevention, not feeling; and I have seen them in ecstasies at some of the very worst speaking, that ever drunkenness and wretched manners could contrive to deliver to a popular assembly.

Bensley's Manly kept fully up to the Townley ; and Miss Farren, perhaps, such is poor human nature, seemed in her errors more captivating than in her repentance.

As Mr. Kemble now acted Macbeth for the benefit of the HOUSE, it may be proper to observe upon the arrangements made by him for the greater effect of the scene. Among the improvements was the clock striking Two, as the appointed time for the murder of Duncan. That it was so, is proved afterwards in the perturbed sleep of Lady Macbeth. It is more awful and alarming, thus to startle silence by a deep-toned summoner, than to be brought back into petty life, by the tinkle of a table-bell. This, to be sure, dismisses the direction to the servant, as a mere excuse for his delaying yet to retire —

“ Go, bid thy mistress, when my DRINK is ready,  
She strike upon the bell.”

“ Alas ! HE takes no drink !” It is moreover a better *coup de theatre*, as the French call such things ; but it never suggested itself to Shakspeare. In the folio 1623, (printed at farthest from a transcription of the original manuscript, for in quarto Macbeth never had appeared,) the stage or prompter's direction, is “ *a bell rings.*” Had the preferable thought occurred to the author, it would have been as easy to write, *the clock strikes two.* It is so noted, be it remembered, in the play

of Cymbeline, where we read, in this same folio, "*Clocke strikes,*" and Iachimo counts it —

"One! two, three! — Time, time."

That there ~~was~~ no music at the sinking of the caldron was certainly not an improvement. Music was as much an essential to such things as the veneficial instruments of the witches; besides, music is directed by Shakspeare; and such a dance as these beings can perform is also ordered in the margin. Some points were noted by a gentleman of admirable taste, whom I have the honour to call my friend, in the delivery of which Garrick achieved what Kemble did not touch at all — these were, first, to Duncan,—

"The service and the loyalty I owe, &c."

where his homage was delightfully rendered, and secured in the sovereign's breast an '*absolute trust.*' The soliloquy preceding the murder, where Garrick's eye was absolute fascination, as he pursued the imaginary dagger, I always myself thought my friend Kemble here too explosive, too much in action;—but compared with Mr. Garrick, he had a larger space to fill. Yet it is difficult to conceive a finer eye than Kemble's. Garrick was more impressive and harmonious, too, in the address to the witches at the pit of Acheron —

"I conjure you, by that which you profess,  
(Howe'er you come to know it,) answer me!  
Though you untie the winds, &c."

Mr. Kemble, perhaps from having a weaker organ, never made any thing of this sublime invocation. Yet it is in my judgment essential, every word of it, as impressive of awe for the powers of mischief whom he invokes, and alarm for the condition of that miserable being, whose fancy can teem with such variety of wretchedness "even till "destruction sicken." He at last decided to omit the whole series of consequences, and cut the speech down flatly to —

"Howe'er you come to know it, answer me  
To what I ask you."

The impatient *gods* alone could thank him for the omission. They arrived sooner at the *armed head* — the *bloody child*, and the *infant crowned* with a tree in his hand; and, best of all, the *eight kings* in succession, followed by the triumphant Banquo,

"Who points at them for *his*."

As, at the time I am speaking of, Mrs. Siddons had never read in public the language of the witches, there was then an excuse, which cannot be made now, if their effect is not even sublime. James Aickin, to his honour, showed that he felt much of it; Moody was drowsy, and Burton silly.

The music of Matthew Locke in this tragedy has crowded the stage with people to sing it; and

in the crowd beauty, formerly and since, forced its way into notice. The Witch of the lovely Crouch wore a fancy hat, powdered hair, rouge, point lace, and fine linen enough to enchant the spectator. Perhaps in her vindication it may be allowed, that in so enormous a rabble, one invariable squalidness of attire would be merely disgusting. Among the mingling black, white, red, and grey spirits some may be imagined fantastic enough to assume the garb of beauty, as in all probability many must possess the features. Let it be remembered that in the ancient traditions of the fallen spirits, one of them, Azazel, having corrupted Naamah, and continuing impenitent, still presides over the toilets of the women. It is difficult to feel the severity of such a punishment. Besides, I know not why the stage should refuse those aids of elegance and fancy, which that inimitable artist Sir Joshua Reynolds introduced, in this very caldron scene in Macbeth, and the still bolder imagination of Fuseli constantly displayed when dressing the gay creatures of the element, that "live in the colours of the rainbow." The group did not consist entirely of witches — spirits of the four elements mingled in the incantations.

Mrs. Siddons in Lady Macbeth then gave the finished sketch, as painters term it, of the grand and terrible impersonation, which some years after she fully *made out*. I do not know whether her dazzling beauty at this period did not injure the

effect of her performance. That BEAUTY and TRUTH are *one* is so pleasing a principle, that atrocious cruelty, when coupled with personal loveliness, begets incredulity; and the act, to the spectator, wears the appearance of moral impossibility.

“AMBITION should be made of *sterner* stuff.”

At no period of his life did Mr. Kemble ever make so various a display of his talents as the present. He acted Leon in the *Rule a Wife*, a part in which his strongly contrasted manner always amused me highly. On the 11th of November he performed *Sciolto*, which Rowe's versification has taken especial care should never be rightly pronounced (in reality it is a word of two syllables, *Shōlto*); but the good *Sci-ōlto* must continue to torture Italian ears for ever, or some little shorter period, to which the *Fair Penitent* must I think certainly extend. Utterly unlike every thing which had preceded him, Mr. Kemble rendered the stern principle of the father absolutely sublime. On the very next night he acted *Mirabel*, in the *Way of the World*, and he certainly stood well in the place of Smith; but the house was thin, though Miss Farren graced her own *Millamant*. In a few days followed his *Romeo*; but youthful love I think was never well expressed by Kemble: the thoughtful strength of his features was at variance with juvenile passion; where love had grown into habit,

and become the master of his existence, and reason had ratified passion, he had no equal; who ever could express like him the fevered affection of Octavian, or the daring devotedness of Rolla? It would scarcely be exaggeration, to call his heart-felt exhibition of these characters "the triumph of woman." I mean by this expression, the praise of that sex, which can subdue natures thus noble, and inspire noble natures with such exalted feelings and purposes. But a most important revival indeed awaits us.

Dr. Johnson, the reader will recollect, pointed out Queen Katharine in Henry VIII. to the particular attention of Mrs. Siddons; and notwithstanding the indecent sneer, implied in the following quotation, by the late George Steevens,

*Quid valet, ad surdas si cantet Phœmius aures ?  
Quid cœcum Thamyran picta tabella juvat —*

I incline to think that Dr. Johnson, by the side of his dear friend Sir Joshua, in the orchestra of Drury Lane Theatre, might formerly have derived very considerable pleasure from such an admirable performance. He had in his own house gazed upon the expressive countenance of Mrs. Siddons; and her majestic utterance would in his fancy have easily supplied the corresponding graces of her movement and gesture. I will venture to say, that one who was not born blind, if he heard the great actress exclaim "Lord Cardinal!" remarked the

pause that ensued ; and the emphasis in what followed it —

“ To you I speak ;”

would have had immediately pictured in his mind, the indignant and energetic attitude she assumed ; have seen the scorn that fluttered upon her lip ; and the lightning of her eye, that waited but the approach of Wolsey, to wither up his hypocrisy.

Mr. Kemble had resolved to bring out the play, with all the advantage that could be given to it by his researches of every sort, so as in fact to become, what it was, the nearest thing to reality that imitation ever achieved. He gave Henry himself to Palmer, who played it admirably. Mr. Bensley was in possession of the part of Wolsey, and from old feelings of respect for that gentleman, Kemble could not think of disturbing him. He knew besides that his sister, in some of the heavier scenes of the Queen, would need a duteous and intelligent observance — that she would require, in the language of our poet's Cleopatra on the Cydnus, those who

“ tended her i'the EYES,  
And made their bends adornings.”

Here, therefore, he combined the two characters of Cromwell and Griffith, and himself performed this faithful servant, of Wolsey first, and afterwards of Queen Katharine. I can only say that, while



he kept this character, it was an enchanting exhibition of humility, affection, and reverence; it suggested every proper feeling for the personages about whom it was occupied, and neither Wolsey would have been so striking, nor Katharine so affecting, without the "well-played passion" of Cromwell.

However, in the course of this season, Mr. Bensley, on account of his health, being obliged to go to Bath, Mr. Kemble found it absolutely necessary to prepare himself for Wolsey; and at that time evinced great discernment of the character, which in powerful contrast yields to no dramatic exhibition whatever. But when he came afterwards to study the part more profoundly, and to take in all the collateral aids derived from Cavenish and Fiddes, he spoke to me of the *rawness* of his first performance; as indeed he was entitled to do, from the elaboration which, at Covent Garden Theatre, rendered his Wolsey one of the most affecting moral lessons on the stage. I shall, therefore, myself decline here to touch upon the prominent points, and consider him for the present merely as the Cromwell of the drama. And indeed it would have been well if the critics of that day had also abstained from some exemplifications of his errors. One of them told him that, in the passage "poor, weak man, the image of his Maker," Mr. Kemble should have laid the stress upon the epithets *poor* and *weak*; and I dare say it will at first appear

singular that he did not do so. But a little knowledge of critical hurry leads me to observe merely, that no stress could be laid on these epithets by the actor, for the best of all reasons — they are not in the part. Witness the passage :

“ Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition ;  
By that sin fell the angels ; how can man then,  
The image of his Maker, hope to win by't ? ”

The processions, in which this play particularly abounds, afforded great scope for the knowledge of ancient habits and manners which Mr. Kemble had acquired ; and that study of the picturesque, by which Shakspeare himself, quite as much as by any other quality, transcended all other writers for the stage. Mr. Kemble arranged these exhibitions with punctilious exactness ; and having himself to sustain a character not very much occupied in the play, he gave his attention, when it was needed, throughout ; until all the raw material was worked into the smoothness of graceful habit. He had employed his pen, too, in alterations.

On the 28th of November, after he had given a very excellent performance of *Hastings*, in *Jane Shore*, an alteration from *Bickerstaff* by Mr. Kemble, called *The Pannel*, added to the attractions of *Mrs. Jordan*. The piece was originally Spanish, and has all the delightful bustle of the plots of *Calderon*. It may be a question, whether more laughter was ever excited in a theatre, than by the

great comic actress in the character of Beatrice. Her *gown* was never mentioned without convulsing the audience.

He added to his range of characters, on the 9th of December, the performance of young Norval, in Home's tragedy of Douglas. In the contest with Glenalvon, Kemble rose to the most consummate excellence. It was remarked, on this occasion, that his sister astonished even those best acquainted with her Lady Randolph — it was a noble contest for pre-eminence. Perhaps, too, the acting with her *brother*, in the agonizing fifth act, allowed a freer course to the feelings of the actress. There is always some reserve in a woman of delicacy towards a mere representative relation.

I will not interrupt the narrative of that great display which Kemble made of himself this season: other matters shall form a supplement. On the 19th of January, 1789, he performed Zanga, in the Revenge, and in the truly great scene with Alonzo in the fifth act, towered above himself. Yet the vast explosion upon the words “*'Twas I!*” however answered by the applause of the audience, was but mere noise, compared with the sensibility as to the *blow* throughout, and the dismissal of enmity at the offender's death —

“ A lion preys not upon carcasses.”

But he turned to Shakspeare once more this season for striking effect, and produced Coriolanus,

with a few additions from Thomson—I mean nearly in the state in which the play was left by old Sheridan in the year 1755, when he himself acted the haughty patrician at Covent Garden Theatre. I do not pretend that, at the first production, either Kemble or Mrs. Siddons achieved the fame subsequently attached to their performance of *Coriolanus* and *Volumnia*. By a course of peculiar study, antiquity became better known to Mrs. Siddons; and Mr. Kemble also grew more completely Roman. Mrs. Damer had led her friends into admiration of the forms which she had modelled; and I presume it was from the display of that lady's talent, that the great actress became attached to the same pursuit. The application to statuary is always the study of the antique. It soon became apparent, that Mrs. Siddons was conversant with drapery more dignified than the shifting robes of fashion; and in truth her action also occasionally reminded the spectator of classic models. She had not derived this from any foreign theatres, for she had then seen none. Her attention to sculpture accounts for it satisfactorily.

As to Mr. Kemble, though he never handled the pencil, he had a great affection for the art, and well understood how far it could be serviceable to his own. In our morning walks together, we called upon the artists to whom we were alike known, and viewed the progress of their works, whether of history or portrait, with sincere satisfaction. Mr.

Kemble's politeness and modesty at such times rendered him a welcome visitor ; and the silence that invades every body, I think, in a gallery of pictures, was seldom broken by my friend, who usually reserved all remarks until we had taken our leave. The mention of this circumstance brings affectingly to my recollection the many many hours I have enjoyed of his unreserved communication, and the steadiness of his friendship at all times — I am obliged to quit the subject abruptly.

Mr. Kemble this season fully developed his system as a manager : it was that of good sense and fine taste. He had thoroughly estimated the genius of his contemporaries, and might, with modesty, think himself “as well able to bombast out “a blank verse as the best of them.” Without proscribing new efforts, he did not court them, and certainly expected from them nothing that could bear the neighbourhood of Shakspeare. The earth-born spirits, therefore, were kept at proper distance and in due subordination ; and imitating the wisdom of Copernicus, he placed our dramatic sun in the centre of the system.

## CHAP. II.

OTHER NOVELTIES OF KEMBLE'S FIRST SEASON AS MANAGER. — MRS. GOODALL IN ROSALIND. — MRS. JORDAN ALSO ACTS THAT CHARACTER. — HER NELL. — CORINNA. — LADY BELL. — HER FOIBLE. — NEW PIECES, CUMBERLAND, COBB, MRS. INCHBALD. — THE PROPHET. — RD. BENTLEY. — O'KEEFE. — ALADDIN. — ST. JOHN'S MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS. — GENERAL CONWAY. — RICHMOND HOUSE THEATRICALS. — THE KING'S RECOVERY. — THE QUEEN'S FIRST DRAWING-ROOM. — AUTHOR'S TRIBUTE TO HER MAJESTY'S EXCELLENCE. — SHE APPEARS AT COVENT GARDEN THEATRE. — MRS. SIDDONS IN JULIET. — REYNOLDS, HIS DRAMATIST. — MR. MACKLIN. — THE AUTHOR'S KNOWLEDGE OF HIM. — BURNING OF THE OPERA HOUSE. — TALENTS THAT HAD BEEN DISPLAYED IN IT. — ITS VISITORS. — MANCHESTER THEATRE BURNT. — MR. KEMBLE, WITH MR. AICKIN, TAKES THE LIVERPOOL HOUSE. — THE OPENING PROLOGUE. — MR. KEMBLE'S TRAGEDY. — HIS MACCHIAVEL. — MRS. INCHBALD'S MARRIED MAN. — MR. COLMAN'S BATTLE OF HEXHAM. — PLEASANTRY OF THE AUTHOR.

WHEN I decided not to break the series of Mr. Kemble's performances, I promised a supplement as to the other novelties of the season of 1788-9. They were so numerous, that the mention of them

must necessarily be as brief, as consists with my design of combining, with the life of its great ornament, the view of the stage itself during that life.

Mrs. Goodall, from the Bath Theatre, made her first appearance at Drury Lane on the 2d October, 1788, in *Rosalind*. She gave no unsuitable impression of the character, if it be limited to Oliver's phrase from Orlando's mouth, "the shepherd youth  
"whom he, in sport, doth call his *Rosalind*." The elevated mind of this rival of Grecian beauties, as it displayed itself either in exquisite sensibility or exquisite humour, resided only in the breast or brain, whichever may claim the perfections, of Mrs. Siddons.

With respect to a greater essential with vulgar audiences, the *figure* of Mrs. Goodall, in the male habit, was more decidedly deceptive than any other, which the spirit of travesty has displayed, in the persons of Miss Walpole, Mrs. Jordan, Madame Hilligsberg, and Miss Tree. How far the assurance, shrouded under this dress, could be carried, and with, or without "a pure blush" passed current, Mrs. Jordan fully established on the night of her benefit—but her *laugh* and her *voice* were irresistible. There was the Devil to Pay after it, and her inimitable Nell, to conciliate every body. She added to her stock this season, what was peculiarly happy, *Corinna* in Vanbrugh's *Confederacy*; and the part of Lady Bell, in Murphy's *Know your own Mind*. This was the *foible*

of Mrs. Jordan; but she never could look the woman of fashion. It was a smart soubrette, who had hurried on her lady's finest apparel, and over-acted the character to avoid being detected. Her tragedy, too, was insufferable notwithstanding her fine organ.

I have let pass a stroke of undesigned severity, in mentioning the performers before the authors of novelties; but Mr. Cumberland supplied the two houses with a couple of very careless productions, *The Impostor*, at Drury Lane, a sort of *Beaux Stratagem*; and the *School for Widows*, at Covent Garden, open only three nights, and forsaken the second.

Cobb had done great service at Drury Lane, on various occasions, and his *Doctor and Apothecary*, besides making known the whim and tact of its author, introduced to the British public the musical talents of Stephen Storace, who, shortly after, in the *Haunted Tower*, taught the proper use to be made of the Italian opera.

Mrs. Inchbald, always assiduous to serve her friend Mr. Harris, gave him a valuable four-act piece from the *Zelie* of Madame de Genlis, called the *Child of Nature*. It will always charm in the hands of any lovely and sensible young actress, such as Miss Brunton was, when she acted *Amanthis*. It is now, I believe, cut into fewer acts than four; but in comedy to have fewer than the usual *five* indicates deficient business; and the hint of com-



pression once given, is usually followed to a degree, that renders the fable unintelligible.

A fortnight afterwards, Mr. Harris produced a comic opera, called the *Prophet*, which had, perhaps, formed one of the day-dreams of Richard Bentley, the great critic's son; and who had employed his pencil, at times, at the suggestion of Walpole, and for the embellishment of Gray. Poor Bentley had died in 1782, and left the *Prophet* among his papers. But, living or dead, he was fated to be unsuccessful; and the *Prophet*, after a short struggle, sunk "to endless night." Could Bentley have been contented to seek anything by the common road to it, he had power of mind to have achieved, by common industry, very desirable success; but he flew off after some crochet of the brain, and rendered his talent unsuitable, and his friends useless. The stage has had to display, however, in their turn, models of perseverance in a given track — men who, without positive genius and with slender knowledge, have acquired the rewards, if not the honours, of the drama. It is even dangerous to THINK *above* the mind of your audience.

O'Keefe was in no danger of the sort just hinted, and his comedy of the *Toy* met with ample success. It is included by him in the collection of his works, though it was suspected to be little more than Pilon's unfinished *Ward in Chancery*. Managers have many opportunities of this sort, and frequently

a plot dramatic, as well as political, could it change hands, would succeed.

ALADDIN, or the *Lamp*, which has been a wonder in the present days, was no slight pantomimic attraction in the Christmas time of the year 1788. The story was followed only through three scenes, and then, as might be expected, and indeed desired, the Sieur Delpini, relieved from Probationary Odes, had it all to himself.

The Honourable John St. John had ventured to compose a tragedy upon the subject of Mary Queen of Scots, and Kemble and Mrs. Siddons condescended to act the parts of Norfolk and the Queen. But versifying the descriptions of Robertson, and thinking without a *catholic* mind, and with no enthusiasm, either for Mary or ancient times, will do nothing in this drama. There can be no sort of doubt as to the philosophic candour, and the beautiful language that distinguish both Hume and Robertson. But the rudest chronicler of past ages is infinitely better suited to the dramatic poet. He wants a fulness of statement, because he must not only know events in their abstract ; he requires *detail*, to put the scene before you ; and the more passion and prejudice and peculiar manners, the Chronicler notes, the better his chance of holding up the dramatic mirror to actual nature. How would even Shakspeare have invented the arguments for Henry's invasion of France, or the inimitable address of Queen Katharine, on her trial, first

written by a man, who actually heard her Majesty deliver it? The lapse of time, too, begets ignorance of manners; and the nearer the record to the fact, the greater the likeness to the action; or to what people *then* thought of it; and this is every thing to the stage-poet.

General Conway's False Appearances, I only notice, because its attraction at Richmond House transferred it with undiminished effect to the regular stage. When I say this I, in course remember, that the *private* theatrical was sustained by Lord Henry Fitzgerald, Lord Derby, Captain Merry; the Hon. Mrs. Damer, and Miss Hamilton. At one of these exhibitions at Richmond House, the play was Lee's Theodosius; and Miss Hamilton sang the very last air composed by Sacchini. The reason of noticing it in this place is to preserve the words written to that air by Mrs. Piozzi. They will at all events convert digression into beauty.

SONG—by *Miss Hamilton*.

“ Vain's the breath of adulation,  
 Vain the tears of tenderest passion,  
 While a strong imagination  
 Holds the wandering mind away !  
 Art in vain attempts to borrow  
 Notes, to sooth a rooted sorrow :  
 Fix'd to die — and die to-morrow,  
 What can touch her soul to-day ? ”

Miss Farren, I believe, used to look on at these rehearsals; and the dresses worn by Mrs. Damer

were refined models of decoration, frequently suggested both by herself and Mrs. Siddons. And I may be permitted to ask what could equal such an amusement in the circles of fashion, limiting its indulgence strictly to their own rank? It required talent, and it displayed it in the eye of majesty itself. By these entertainments an attempt was made to revive the *gothic* triumphs in the courts of James and Charles, and something was enjoyed beyond a concert or a crowd!

Mrs. Siddons this season, at her first benefit, employed her skill upon Capt. Jephson's *Law of Lombardy*. It is certainly the least attractive of his tragedies. She even acted in the farce for the amusement of her friends; and tried the effect of the fine lady in Garrick's *Lethe*. But the manners of the former fine lady were forgotten. It is often to be regretted, that temporary pleasantries cannot be adapted to fluctuating life; and when they are ingenious like *Lethe*, remain stock-pieces for a century.

In a former chapter of this work, I was under a necessity of noticing the King's most afflicting indisposition, and the political struggle in which Mr. Pitt maintained a position the most dignified and extraordinary that any minister ever assumed. The stage, during the few months of His Majesty's calamitous depression, sympathised in every proper way with the national feeling. The admirable supplication, "God save the King," was demanded

usually by the audience, and sung by the whole house with the deepest reverence. At length the hopes of all good men were realised, and on the 26th of February every symptom of the royal complaint had vanished. The minister received the great reward of his steadiness in the approbation of His Majesty, and a triumph that resounded through the nation obliterated in a moment the former fierce struggles of party.

On such an event much splendor might be looked for at court, and the Queen's first drawing-room was a display somewhat theatrical. I shall, in such a view, insert a short notice of it. Before an assemblage of all that was noble in birth, or gay or beautiful in higher life, Her Majesty, on the 26th of March, 1789, appeared, to receive congratulations upon the greatest event of her existence.

The Queen sat on this occasion in a chair of state, under a magnificent canopy, attended by her household. She was a perfect blaze of diamonds, disposed with every possible application to the circumstances that had occurred. The sentiment, which seemed to be impressed by the display, was unbounded exultation, that, under Providence, she had been enabled to discharge the high duties of her great and difficult position.

Round the Queen's neck was a medallion, tied with a double row of gold chain, and across her shoulders was another chain of pearls in three rows; but the portrait of the King was suspended

from five rows of diamonds fastened low upon the dress behind, and streaming over her person with the most gorgeous effect. The tippet was of fine lace, fastened with the letter G in brilliants of immense value. In the front of Her Majesty's hair, in letters formed by diamonds, were easily legible the words "God save the King." The Princesses were splendidly, but not equally, adorned. The female nobility wore emblematical designs beautifully painted on the satin of their caps, and fancy teemed with the inventions of loyalty and joy. At half an hour after six o'clock Her Majesty quitted the drawing-room for duties still more interesting.

Upon the present occasion I cannot close the subject without expressing the full conviction of my understanding and my heart, that a more glorious being than the consort of George the Third never existed. I have lived to see a miserable delusion withdraw some part of the affection of the multitude for a time; but she was in truth the idol of the people, and they paid to her that sort of homage, as if in her person they were reverencing the form of VIRTUE itself.

The King's health being completely re-established, the Queen made her first appearance before the public on the 15th of April, 1789, by coming to Covent Garden Theatre in state; accompanied by three of the Princesses — the Princess Royal, Augusta, and Elizabeth. Her Majesty entered

the royal box alone ; the Princesses not being for a few minutes ready. On the appearance of the Queen, a shout arose of transport from the spectators — the curtain ran up and displayed a transparency, which had the words in striking letters *Long live the King* — and *May the King live for ever*. For all this no preparation could be sufficient, and tears fortunately came to her relief. In this state she paid her compliments to her people. On the entrance of the Princesses, the emotion somewhat subsided —

“ It seem’d she was a Queen  
Over her passion ; who, most rebel-like,  
Sought to be King o’er her.”

To talk of any common occurrences after this reception would be idle indeed ; and the entertainments of the evening were quite common trash, without the slightest bearing upon the event — viz. *He would be a Soldier* — and *Aladdin* ! There was no better taste on the stage than to have the King’s health given by Edwin, the far greater Liston of that time.

I cannot but hope that His Majesty read none of the poetry written and recited upon the occasion. . The ode was the prevalent form, and the general expression either feeble and flat, or bombastic and unintelligible. Mrs. Siddons, I remember, recited some lumber of the latter kind in public, at one of the clubs ; and also on the night of

her second benefit, after her performance of Juliet, but the poems had been destined to the vault of the Capulets. As to the Juliet, it was exactly what might have been anticipated — too dignified and thoughtful to assume the childish ardours of a first affection; but, as the serious interest grew upon the character, impassioned, terrific, and sublime. When I give this as the general impression from her performance, I should, as to the early scenes, say that perhaps the language of Juliet was never so well given; and it was only by contrasting the form and its mature energy with the sentiments she uttered, that suggested the fit and the unfit, and the division to be made by the critic between the former and latter part of the character. Under the direction of Mr. Garrick, the performers of Juliet had been made to feel or seize every salient point of the character, and it will not therefore be astonishing, that great and original as the genius was that Mrs. Siddons brought to the study of the part, she left fewer of her *marks* upon it, than she did upon any other character of equal force. In this observation I have in view the beauties which she *alone* struck out in Imogen, in Ophelia, in Desdemona, and in the Isabel of Shakspeare's Measure for Measure, with the never-to-be equalled charm in which she invested his Rosalind.

During the autumn of 1788, the Dramatist, a first comedy by Mr. Reynolds, had solicited in vain the judgment of Mr. Harris. As a last resource it



was tendered for the benefit of Mrs. Wells; and Lewis, not as having any hopes from the hero, but as a mark of kindness to the fair beneficiary, condescended to accept the part of Vapid, provided he might speak as much as he liked of it, and speak it but once. On the 15th of May, therefore, he delighted the town, to his own astonishment, with a character, which he played all his acting life, and at his death left in full possession of the stage.

The excellent Mrs. Piozzi used to give, as an instance of the danger of *irony*, the character of Cumberland in Goldsmith's *Retaliation*; which had, by all who did not know the doctor, been taken for serious commendation. He drew the characters which were to mend the *hearts* of the community, not from his contemporaries, but *himself*. However this might be as to the "Terence of England," Reynolds certainly drew from himself the passion for dramatic situation and effect displayed by his hero; for he had literally made up his mind to persevere through all obstruction and discouragement, and be a dramatic author, or NOTHING.

From thinking unfavourably of the new author, the theatre suddenly turned even to thinking about his *interest*; and the hazardous expedient was resorted to, of interrupting the run of the comedy for the few nights belonging to the house at the close of the present season, that it might begin a

race of fame with the ensuing, and run, if it could run so long, to the end of it. In an age of imitation, when, as to the drama, the best authors we had did little more, as they have done little since, than copy from the French stage; it might have been expected, that our young poet would have sketched his stage mania from the *metromanie* of Piron. But our pleasant friend assured me himself, very recently, that *then* he had never read it. While he had the whim, the sparkling hilarity of William Lewis to identify his gay heroes, he constantly produced his very seasonable efforts; indeed, a steady friendship ensued between these sons of mirth; and at his death, Reynolds became, with Mr. Const, the guardian of his children, and executor to his will. Few things are more honourable to human character, than such marks of implicit trust; and though there are some striking instances, at times, of a depraved son insulting the judgment of his father, by his conduct to such friends, the heirs of Mr. Lewis retain an hereditary esteem for the executors of their father.

I have now to record the close of Macklin as an actor. Mr. Harris had for some time given this extraordinary man opportunities of delighting the present age by what originated in the past, and on the 7th of May he attempted his own character, Shylock; but memory having failed him altogether, Ryder finished the part. There had been lapses of memory before, and he had said that should they re-

cur, he would withdraw. As I paid much attention to Macklin's performances, and personally knew him, I shall endeavour to characterise his acting, and discriminate it from that of others. If Macklin really was of the old school, that school taught what was truth and nature. His acting was essentially manly — there was nothing of trick about it. His delivery was more level than modern speaking, but certainly more weighty, direct and emphatic. His features were rigid, his eye cold and colourless; yet the earnestness of his manner, and the sterling sense of his address, produced an effect in Shylock, that has remained to the present hour unrivalled. Macklin, for instance, in the trial scene, "stood like a TOWER," as Milton has it. He was "not bound to *please*" any body by his pleading; he claimed a right, grounded upon LAW, and thought himself as firm as the Rialto. To this remark it may be said, "You are here describing SHYLOCK:" True; I am describing Macklin. If this perfection be true of him, when speaking the language of Shakspeare, it is equally so, when he gave utterance to his own. Macklin was the author of *Love à la Mode* and the *Man of the World*. His performance of the two *true born Scotsmen* was so perfect, as though he had been created expressly to keep up the prejudice against Scotland. The late George Cooke was a noisy Sir Pertinax compared with Macklin. He talked of *booing*, but it was evident he took a credit for suppleness that was

not in him. He was rather Sir Giles than Sir Pertinax. Macklin could inveigle as well as subdue; and modulated his voice, almost to his last year, with amazing skill.

In society, the old gentleman partook of the positive dogmatic style, that I presume to have originated with Quin. Authoritative and overbearing, he seemed to think that age could never be in the wrong, and youth never in the right. Macklin at least never could bring himself to the conclusion to which Dr. Johnson came, who said to Mrs. Piozzi, "In disputes betwixt the old and the young, the young fellow, madam, is in the right nine times out of twelve—I believe I might almost say nine times out of ten." It could only have been in the contemplation of such samples of age as Macklin, that Dr. Johnson formed an opinion so irreverent, and, I yet hope, unfounded.

Macklin once disputed with me upon the *Paradise Lost*, when he took a sentence of exclamation for a simple interrogatory; but where, in reading Milton, he gave only what long habit had settled upon his organs, without any recent effort of the understanding, he proved how minutely he could *once* enquire into meaning, and how forcibly and even beautifully he could render his conceptions. In reciting the exordium of the *Paradise Lost*, there was a masterly instance of his feeling and propriety, in a slight suspension of the voice before he uttered the word

*forbidden* ; and the latter syllables rather lingered out, despondingly. —

“ Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that FOR-BIDD-EN tree,” —

The awful regret, which trembled upon the word, formed the suitable forerunner “ to the great amiss”

“ Whose mortal taste  
Brought DEATH into the world, and ALL our WOE.”

It has been commonly considered that Garrick introduced a mighty change in stage delivery: that actors had never, until his time, been natural. If Macklin at all resembled *his* masters, as it is probable he did, they can certainly not be obnoxious to a censure of this kind. He abhorred all trick, all start and ingenious attitude ; and his attacks upon Mr. Garrick were always directed to the restless abundance of his action and his gestures, by which, he said, rather than by the fair business of the character, he caught and detained all attention to himself.

I took that opportunity to observe upon the elegant, but somewhat painful, attitude into which most Hamlets throw themselves, upon the appearance of the Ghost — “ Sir, it is unnatural, and a “ mere stage trick.” Upon being requested to show me, how HE in Hamlet would first receive the spirit of his father ? He said, “ Remember, sir, to give

“ give me the cues.” And then, with indifference, a little sarcastical, repeated —

“ The King doth wake to night and takes his rouse, &c.

HOR. Is it a custom ? .

HAM. Ay, marry, is it :

But to my mind, — though I am native here,  
And to the manner born — it is a custom  
More honour'd in the breach, than the observance.

HOR. Look, my Lord, it comes !”

MACKLIN, here, with a sudden spring of the shoulders, and a slight throwing back of the body, the arms pointing downwards, and the fingers flying open, — in a breathless, scarcely audible tone, pronounced the ejaculation —

“ Angels, and ministers of grace, defend us !”

“ From ALL surprise, it is not to be expected,  
“ that even Hamlet should be guarded ; but al-  
“ ways recollect, sir, that he *came* there, to see his  
“ father's spirit.”

With respect to the alleged unfairness of Garrick in engrossing all attention to himself, a charge often repeated, it may, perhaps, be true, that this great master converged the interest of the whole too much about his particular character ; and willingly dispensed with any rival attraction, not because he shunned competition with it as *skill*, but because it might encroach upon, delay or divide that palm for which he laboured — public applause.

Macklin, when he did not intend to be rude, had in conversation a mode of saying tart things in the language of compliment. One of these mac-sarcasms he played off upon Mr. Kemble. "Sir," said he, "I have known your family, from generation to generation. I have seen you act, young man; and I have seen your father, sir; — and I have seen your grand-father, sir. Sir, he was a great actor, he could make much out of a little. There was Jupiter — Sir; in JUPITER, Dryden himself was not fuller of the God, than he was: and in LAERTES, sir, he was the only Laertes, that I ever saw — no; there never was a Hamlet that could stand near him." Kemble heard this *persiflage* with a smile, and told the story in a singularly fine imitation of Macklin's manner. "But these ancestral honours of mine," he added, "Mr. Macklin certainly did *not* find in Ovid."

"Nam mihi LAERTES pater est — Arcesius illi —

JUPITER huic — neque in his quisquam DAMNATUS et exsul!"

I am now to speak of one of those casualties, with which we were soon to be familiar, and indeed expect, in dreadful succession; I mean the burning of the Opera-House, in the Haymarket. On the 17th of June, 1789, I was on my return from a visit, crossing the Park from Buckingham Gate to Stable Yard, St. James's, when this most tremendous conflagration burst upon me; it seemed to make the long lines of trees in the Mall wave in an

atmosphere of fire. As I approached the spot, the consternation appeared to settle nearly in the eyes — little motion in the crowd; all gaze, all wonder. The fire had commenced in the Flies, and burst through the roof in a column of confirmed fierceness, that evinced its strength to have been irresistible even when it was first perceived. In the theatre, about ten o'clock, they had been rehearsing a ballet, and the first alarm was occasioned by the sparks of fire which fell upon the heads of the dancers. Madame Ravelli was with difficulty saved by one of the firemen; Madame Guimard lost a slipper, but escaped in safety. Little or nothing was saved of the property in the theatre, and a perhaps moderate estimate computed the loss at £70,000.

This was the theatre built by Sir John Vanbrugh, and finished in 1706. From some inattention to the doctrine of acoustics, the house, at first, was ill suited to “the purpose of playing.” Its well-like properties produced such undulations of the voice, that, until the roof was lowered, all articulation on the stage came indistinctly to the ear. It was a grand palatial structure, and bore the usual evidences of Vanbrugh, not as a poet, but architect; — heaviness and dignity — projection and force.\*

\* As a musical structure, nothing can exceed the present Opéra-House, by Novosielski. Let it be remembered, too, that this ingenious foreigner gave the front of that magnificent man-



A descendant of Sir John Vanbrugh enjoyed £800 per year from this property ; and the late King, in consideration for this gentleman, had interfered to prevent a new opera-house from being erected on another spot. In Market Lane, five houses were burnt, and the stables of the White Horse Inn. The night was so still and calm, that the contiguous houses in Pall Mall were saved. I saw Mr. Burke standing close to the scene, seemingly delighting in the energy and skill, with which the Bridewell Boys served their first-rate engine, in the place of honour ; that is, of greatest peril. At Carleton House, the proper vigilance was used to avert danger from the showers of fire, which were falling through the night. The supply of water could have been but scanty, for at twelve o'clock of the following day, the fire was, at the back of the Opera-House, burning like a furnace. It was, at the time, considered to be the work of some diabolical malice ; and a death-bed confession was once repeated to me, that revealed the name of the incendiary.

It may be expected that the sudden stop put to

sion, in Piccadilly, once inhabited by the Emperor Alexander, and now completing by the exact taste of the Marquis of Hertford. The depth and beauty of Novosielski's enrichments in this front will strike the man of taste, as he passes, with some astonishment, that what is so true and so superior, is yet so little imitated in more modern structures. Lord Hertford keeps it as Novosielski left it, except as to the door, which is plain and simple, agreeably to the present taste for entrances.

this refined amusement among us, should call for some record of the talents, which had previously illustrated the Italian Opera; and I willingly preserve the impressions, which they have left upon my mind. In my youth I had begun the study of music as a treble, in an amateur society of some celebrity. I was well grounded in our great cathedral harmonists, and consequently was not meanly qualified to enjoy the splendid fancy of the Italian composers. The band was led by Cramer, whose firm tone and unbending truth of style claim my utmost respect. Sir John Gallini, in the engagements of performers, had been somewhat cautious. He had allowed the Soprano Pacchierotti to escape him, but he had engaged Signor Marchesi, and the highest hopes were entertained by those who had heard him in Italy.

The appearance of such a singer as Marchesi was of great importance in a musical sense. Serious opera must decline, if not supported on the plan of its composition. If the chief male have a Soprano part assigned him by the composer, it is of no use to prattle about manliness, *such* creatures, and so forth. The usual recourse since has been either transposition, or consigning the hero to a female, and in consequence the effect is beyond measure weakened. Marchesi, though not so affecting as Pacchierotti, nor so sweet as Rubinelli, had a compass that extended through three octaves, and scarcely any of these notes were weak or uncer-

tain. The trick called the semitonal run, he really executed with distinctness. At first landing among us, he laboured to astonish rather than delight. This pervaded the whole of his first Opera Giulio Sabino, a work of Sarti, and brought out under the direction of Mazzinghi. In the Olimpiade and others, he at length more powerfully controlled the affections, and was in all senses a great master of his art. Signora Giuliani, who was his first woman, after the previous studies of the Conservatore, had been under the tuition of the accomplished Pacchierotti : she was never great ; but always agreeable and true.

We had not been accustomed to hear the quality of voice, possessed by Marchesi, proceed from a well formed person ; and never had it been accompanied with heroic action. The manner of Marchesi was so built upon the antique, that he constantly reminded you of Grecian sculpture ; or something rather more delicate, the forms of antiquity designed by Angelica Kauffman. His refined manners gave him the entrée to our families of distinguished rank, and there were few among the female nobility, who did not take lessons from Marchesi.

They who remember the *full* power of Morelli's voice, and the gaiety of Storace in the operas of Paesiello and Cimarosa, will readily conceive, that the Opera Buffa was a source of great entertainment ; — for Morelli, in addition to a depth of tone

perfectly astonishing, and at least great *practical* knowledge of musical effect, was an actor such as the Italian stage has seldom witnessed. He was, I used to think, in his prime, quite upon a par with Mr. King of Drury Lane Theatre. Like him, he was distinguished for neat articulation, and an unremitting attention to the business of the whole stage. In his solos he took his own course of whim and pleasantry, and was decorous while sportive;—but in the concerted pieces, in the busy *finales* of the opera, he did what every base singer of sense will do, he waited upon the other singers; and poured in the rich support of his grand and manly tones, just where they were wanted, and in the closes your ear caught him rolling along, like

“ The sound of thunder heard remote.”

Of ballet masters they had the first in the world, NOVERRE. That admirable artist knew the value of mythology; that it formed the religious code of the ballet. To execute his conceptions, he had that unapproached Vestris, who was fairly termed *Le Dieu de la danse*, and by whose side Didelot even was poor.—Yet at this time the naïve, the natural Hilligsberg, was a powerful attraction: she had a lovely expression of innocent apprehension or pure festivity, with a wild elastic spring; danced entirely from her feelings; and, unlike our friend in the Tatler, would never have disturbed her lodgings by practising all the hieroglyphics of her

book. When she had exhausted her few steps, she used fairly to run away off the stage, and this run of her's had all the beauty without the cruelty of *Atalanta's*. The *Guimard* was a dancer of another kind, highly accomplished both as to science and expression. She was under articles with *Gallini*, at the time of the accident, which it was contended, I remember, were dissolved by the calamity.

The high life assembled in our Opera-house is itself the most captivating of all sights. I cannot say, as *Horace* does, "*O matre pulchra, filia pulchrior,*" for I do not think the daughters lovelier than their mothers; and, in a multitude of instances, the predecessors of our reigning beauties were of a grander form, and their deportment was fashioned in a finer school. The exterior was at once stately and gracious. I remember when we waited, as for a triumph, to see the *Devonshires* or the *Rutlands* walk down the opera stairs to their carriages. We have one consolation in the undress style of the present time; there may be less display, but there is certainly more comfort. To relieve the purity of British beauty from the hands of the friseur of 1789, very great sacrifices indeed were prudently made. I venture to say that head-achs among our ladies cannot be near so prevalent as they were forty years ago.

The very day after the destruction of the Opera-house by fire, namely, on the 18th of June 1789, the *Manchester theatre* was burnt to the ground.

Mr. Kemble, in conjunction with Mr. Aickin, had now taken the Liverpool theatre. I heard, at the time, that the consideration they were to give was £1200 down, and a rent of £350 per annum.—Of these terms I am no judge whatever ; Mr. Kemble opened the theatre himself with an Address by M. P. Andrews, which, like Bottom's Prologue, said or seemed to say, some trash like the following :

“ For me, the new-made monarch, fix'd by fate  
To sway the sceptre of this mimic state,  
May the reign prosper, as desert *shall seem*.”

A “*new-made*” monarch, “*fix'd by fate*,” to prosper as desert “*may seem*,” is a combination of nonsense so exquisite, that it wanted only a proper mouth, like Liston's, to give it utterance. My friend was commonly more attentive as to what he was to speak, in town or out of it. Indeed it is rather surprising that he consigned the task of opening his theatre to any muse but his own at this time ; for he had now seriously invoked the goddess, and had really written the first act of a tragedy upon the subject of Atheism, which he once read to me, and I think also read to the Drury-lane company in the green-room. At this distance of time I can only say of it, that the interest opened remarkably well, and that the expression was nervous and exact, like the best manner of Dryden, of whose diction Mr. Kemble was peculiarly fond. As I have heard no more of it, he probably de-

stroyed so much of the book as it occupied. In this casual mention of his literary pursuits, I may be perhaps indulged with another reference to his studies. His copy of Machiavel is now in my library, and he has marked, as intending it for dramatic use, the very powerful speech of the Plebeian in the third book of that author's History of Florence. It is a manual of revolutionary topics, of which a short taste may suffice. "The enter-  
 " prise (says our mob orator) is not only easy, but  
 " certain; because those, who should oppose us,  
 " are divided, and rich: their divisions will give us  
 " the victory, and their riches, when ours, shall  
 " maintain it. Let not the antiquity of their blood  
 " dismay you, though so insolently asserted. All  
 " men, having the same original, are equally an-  
 " cient, and nature has made no difference in their  
 " contexture; strip them naked, you are as well  
 " fashioned as they; dress them in your rags, and  
 " yourselves in their robes, and you will doubtless  
 " be the nobles; for riches or poverty alone it is,  
 " that discriminates between you."

One might be tempted to believe that Shakspeare had read this allusion, from a very corrupt passage in the fourth act of his Timon.

" Raise me this beggar, and denude that lord;  
 The senator shall bear contempt hereditary,  
 The beggar native honour."

The word *denude* is a conjecture of Dr. Warburton's. It is remarkable that Mr. Steevens would read

“ *devest* that lord,” which led him also unconsciously to the expression of Machiavel. Perhaps it may be thought that he who in one of his plays “ had set the murderous Machiavel to school,” had been himself occasionally in the school of Machiavel. Mr. Kemble has also marked the character of Cosimo, in the 7th Book, and that of Lorenzo de Medici, in the 8th, probably as models of delineation. I prefer this incidental tracking of his studies to the formality of express dissertation. His acting had every mark about it of severe application. We have now found a much shorter road to perfection.

Mrs. Inchbald was certainly the most assiduous of our modern dramatists. On the 15th of July, her comedy of the *Married Man*, in three acts, was received at Colman’s very favourably. It was a contraction of Destouches’ *Philosophe Marié*. Perhaps even Molière himself has not found greater honour of this sort. Destouches’ comedies are commonly cast in one mould. But his scenes sparkle with gay descriptions, and dilemmas neatly wrought. No writer of the French stage better understands the art of playing off an absurdity. A pleasant instance of this sort occurs in the comedy before us ; where the Philosopher, ashamed of his wedded felicity, has his wife courted to his face by his own friends. The Marquis, having detected his marriage with Melite, describes her ridiculous husband to *himself*, and then exclaims —



Ne le pourriez-vous point connoître à ce portrait?

ARISTE (*le Philos. Marié*)

A-PEU-PRÈS.

MARQUIS.

Ah! tant mieux, j'en suis fort satisfait, &c.

ARISTE (*seul*)

Suis-je mort ou vivant?

All languages have little idiomatic niceties, that are of vast importance, and defy translation. The timid, flat, cautious assent of the "A-PEU-PRÈS" is one of these.

Rendering the French Philosopher an English gentleman of the *Classick* family, the Married Man proved sufficiently entertaining, and augmented the proverbial good humour of the summer audiences.

The younger Colman in the summer season produced the *Battle of Hexham*, at the little theatre. As he intended no great depth of plot or extent of interest, he compressed his play into three acts, and it has no fuller catastrophe than the flight of him for whom we are interested, and the escape of his Queen and Son. The language of his play is an imitation of that of Shakspeare; for this he does not assign so good a reason as he might do. He contents himself with saying that "the language of remote characters should conform to their dress." If Shakspeare himself had thought thus, he would not have written the language of his own period. The reason why it were best to imitate Shakspeare's language, (presuming the power,) is, that at no time, before or since, was the English tongue so

decidedly poetical as in the reign of Elizabeth. It is therefore the richest and fittest garb for distant events, that partake, through tradition, of the romantic. He has another critical remark, "A coxcomb only would aspire to the resemblance of the boundless powers of Shakspeare." Boundless power can only be imitated by power unbounded; and power thus equal will not bind itself to imitation. It is always proper to aspire to the highest excellence.—How nearly you approach it is a point to be settled by others. But Mr. Colman has happily not confined himself to verbal imitations. He thinks after Shakspeare's fashion, chiefly, however, in what is sportive. The following are lucky resemblances :

" Such a coil kept up with their two houses! One's so old  
and t'other's so old!—

They ought both to be pulled down, for a couple of  
nuisances to the nation."

" *Adel.* — How now, fellow?

*Fool.* — How now, fool?

*Adel.* — What, sirrah! call you me fool?

*Fool.* — 'Faith may I, sir; when you call me fellow."

These seem to be recollections—they are only perfect imitations.

Shakspeare but seldom expatiates upon verbal niceties. He has done so once in the *Antony and Cleopatra*, on the words *BUT YET*. — Hear himself:

" *Cleo.* — I do not like *but yet*, it does allay  
The good precedence; fye upon *but yet* :

*But yet is as a gaoler to bring forth  
Some monstrous malefactor."*

Now then remark the use which a youthful genius of twenty-six has put it to :—

*"La Var.* Who, of our party, pry'thee, since the battle,  
Have shelter'd here among the villagers? —  
Can'st tell their names?

*Barton.* Ay, marry, can I, sir.  
But CAN and WILL are birds of diff'rent feather.  
CAN is a swan, that bottles up its music,  
And never lets it out till death is near?  
But WILL's a piping bullfinch, that does ever  
Whistle forth every note it has been taught,  
To any fool that bids it."

But his beauty of expression is at times simple and exquisitely true. He leaves an imitation of Comus for the following picture —

" West of this a little,  
There stand some straggling cottages, that form  
A *silent* village;

This epithet is, I think, new. I have no doubt of its feeling propriety. Mr. Colman has retained his loyalty conspicuously through life. He has made the best use here of that ennobling sentiment, in the references, which he permitted himself, to a painful occurrence about the throne, and the virtues which it called forth. The audience, I remember, applied them with rapturous delight.

Among the applauded passages in this play, none stood higher than the picture of the outlaw's

interrupted slumbers. Perhaps the common stabber of the forest *feels* but little; his life passes in enterprise or intoxication; and reflection is banished by what Macbeth calls "hard use." The picture may certainly be received as a faithful portrait of such a mind as Gondibert's.

The song, which poor Edwin used to sing in Gregory Gubbins, called "Moderation and Alteration," is a judicious imitation of the famous old ballad, "The old and young Courtier," in Percy's second volume. The imitation appears to be closest in the following stanza —

" With a good old fashion, when Christmase was come,  
To call in all his old neighbours with bagpipe and drum,  
With good chear enough to furnish every old room,  
And old liquor able to make a cat speak, and man dumb.  
Like an old courtier of the queen's,  
And the queen's old courtier."

I never yet understood that the sympathy with the heroic Margaret, after the Battle of Hexham, was weakened by the sufferings of the Temple; and though Clery's narrative be extremely affecting, yet Mrs. Inchbald's reading must have been confined, when she thinks it may bid defiance to all that history has recorded or that poets have feigned. But her remarks upon this play are excessively careless — they examine nothing: they tell nothing. Her question, "Did Gondibert know who his sovereign was?" is idle in the extreme. The

partizan always knows this sufficiently to influence his conduct; and risks his life upon his opinion. Nor was this a question for the omnipotence of parliament to decide. It was at last determined by power, and if the right lay in the house of York, the "blood of Lancaster" ultimately prevailed.

As one proof of the pleasant turn of Colman's mind; during the progress of his play one of the tarantula physicians, who dance so madly after theatres, pestered the poet with prescriptions for the better health of his piece. "I beg your pardon, Doctor, said George, but we are talking about the Battle of Hexham, and not a *bottle of Huxham*." The Doctor, who equalled himself in good humour, swallowed the *tincture*, as soon as excessive laughter permitted, and fled from the BATTLE.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

REFERRED TO IN THE INTRODUCTION.

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ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT *indented, had, made, concluded, and fully agreed upon, this seventh day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-six, between SPRANGER BARRY, of Norfolk Street, in the Strand, in the County of Middlesex, Esquire, of the one part, and THOMAS RYDER, of the City of Dublin, in the Kingdom of Ireland, Esquire, (by Tottenham Heaphy, late of the City of Dublin, but now of the City of London, aforesaid, Esquire, his Attorney, thereunto lawfully authorized, as after mentioned,) of the other part.*

**W**HEREAS, by a certain power of attorney, bearing date the twenty-second day of April now last past, after reciting that an agreement had been entered into between the said Spranger Barry and the said Thomas Ryder, for demising to the said Thomas Ryder the Theatre in Crow Street,

with the materials and appurtenances thereunto belonging, for the term of seven years from the first day of May, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-six, at the yearly rent of FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY pounds sterling, secured to him by bonds with warrants of attorney, exclusive of ground rent, taxes, and the interest of subscribers' tickets, to be paid at such times as after mentioned ; for completing of which agreement and the perfecting of the bonds, he the said Thomas Ryder did thereby appoint the said Tottenham Heaphy his true and lawful attorney, for him, and in his name, to affix his seal and sign his name, and as his act and deed to deliver bonds with warrants of attorney to the said Spranger Barry, for the payment of the sum of four hundred and fifty pounds yearly, for the space of seven years from the first day of May aforesaid : And also bonds for all ground rents (to be ascertained by his said attorney) of the said Theatre, with the amount of taxes and subscribers' interest included in said bonds. And as the gross amount of the said ground rents, taxes, and subscribers' interest was not sufficiently known to him, he did also empower his said attorney to fix the same with said Spranger Barry, and execute bonds conformable thereto, agreeable to the said power of attorney. And lest the powers thereby given should not appear to his said attorney to be sufficient for concluding the said recited agreement with said Spranger Barry, he did thereby agree that the said powers and authorities therein given to him should be extended or limited, altered or enlarged, as to his said attorney should appear expedient, thereby confirming what he should do as if particularly expressed in the said letter of attorney : And then reciting that the sum of ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY pounds was payable by government for four plays within the year, and which sum the said Spranger Barry had required should

be made over to him by the said Thomas Ryder in discharge of so much of the said recited rent as the same should amount unto: He did thereby impower said Tottenham Heaphy to execute and perfect such assignment thereof as far as he himself was enabled to do for such time as he should be entitled thereto; and after empowering him to do other acts, he did thereby ratify and confirm all and whatsoever his said attorney should do or cause to be done in the premises as in and by the said letter or power of attorney, reference being thereunto had, will more fully appear. And whereas said Tottenham Heaphy hath in virtue and in execution of the said power of attorney entered into treaty with the said Spranger Barry, for and on behalf of the said Thomas Ryder, for a lease of the said Theatre or Play-house, and other the premises thereunto belonging, for the term of seven years, at and for the yearly rent of EIGHT HUNDRED AND THREE pounds of lawful money of Ireland, free and clear of and from all manner of taxes and deductions whatsoever (other than and except the yearly *ground rent* of ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-EIGHT pounds and ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIVE pounds, make together the sum of THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-THREE pounds, which being deducted out of the said yearly rent of eight hundred and three pounds, reduces the same to the sum of FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY pounds, to be payable to the said Spranger Barry, as his *clear rent* for the said Theatre during the said term) and which said yearly rent of eight hundred and three pounds is to become payable, and the said premises are to be held and enjoyed. And the said Spranger Barry is to grant a lease thereof, and the said Thomas Ryder to execute a counterpart of such lease, in such manner as is hereinafter particularly mentioned, and expressed of and concerning the same respectively. Now



THESE PRESENTS WITNESS, and the said Spranger Barry, in consideration of the payment of the said yearly rent of eight hundred and three pounds of lawful money of Ireland, at the days and times, and in such manner as is hereinafter mentioned, and of the performances of all and every the clauses, covenants, and agreements which on the part and behalf of the said Thomas Ryder, his executors or administrators, are, or ought to be kept, done, and performed, doth hereby for himself, his heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, covenant, promise, and agree to and with the said Thomas Ryder, his executors, administrators, and assigns, that he the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, or some of them, shall and will, at the proper costs and charges in the law of the said Thomas Ryder, his executors or administrators, on or before the twenty-fourth day of June now next ensuing the date of these presents, or when thereunto required, execute, or cause to be executed, a good and sufficient Indenture of Lease in the law, whereby he the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, executors, or administrators, or some of them, shall and will grant, demise, lease, set, and to farm let unto the said Thomas Ryder, his executors, administrators, and assigns, all that the aforesaid Theatre or Play-house, situate, standing, and being in Crow Street, in the City of Dublin aforesaid, with full power and lawful and absolute authority for him the said Thomas Ryder, his executors, administrators, and assigns, to perform and act, and cause to be performed and acted, all and all manner of warrantable and lawful plays, operas, pantomimes, interludes, and concerts of music, and all other lawful and theatrical and musical entertainments whatsoever, for his and their own proper use and benefit. And also all his the said Spranger Barry's right and title to perform and act all

theatrical and musical entertainments in the said theatre, according to the letters patent granted for the licensing the said Building or Play-house as a Theatre Royal, and to enable the proprietors thereof to perform and act all theatrical and musical entertainments therein, and the produce and profits arising and accruing to him the said Spranger Barry therefrom. And also all the furniture, and all and every the scenes, machines, goods and chattels thereupon and therein hanging, standing, and being, and thereunto belonging, and which shall be particularly mentioned, specified, described, and contained in an inventory or schedule thereof, to be made and taken thereof and annexed to the said indented Lease, duplicates whereof have been signed this day by the said Spranger Barry and Tottenham Heaphy. And all outhouses, buildings, edifices, cellars, sollars, chambers, rooms, galleries, boxes, seats, forms, ways, passages, doors, and entrances, waters, water courses, lights, casements, profits, liberties, privileges, commodities, advantages, emoluments, hereditaments, and appurtenances whatsoever, to the said Theatre or Play-house, and other the premises thereby to be demised, or any part thereof belonging, or in any wise appertaining to or with the same, or any part or parcel thereof, held, used, occupied, possessed, or enjoyed, or accepted, reputed, taken, or known, as part, parcel, or member thereof, (except and always out of the said Indenture of Lease to be reserved unto the said Spranger Barry, his heirs and assigns, the two messuages or dwelling-houses : And also his new wardrobe to the said Theatre or Play-house belonging : And also all the waste ground thereunto belonging, situate, lying, and being in the Crow Street, in the City of Dublin aforesaid) : To Hold unto the said Thomas Ryder, his executors, administrators, and assigns, from the first day of

May instant, for and during, and unto the full end and term of seven years from thence next ensuing, and fully to be complete and ended, at and under the several yearly rents or sums hereinafter mentioned (that is to say), the yearly rent or sum of four hundred and fifty pounds of lawful money of Ireland, payable to the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, executors, administrators, or assigns, on the first day of November, the first day of December, the first day of January, the first day of February, the first day of March, the first day of April, and the first day of May, in every year, by equal portions, during the said term of seven years, the first payment thereof to begin and to be made on the first day of November now next ensuing: And the yearly rent or sum of one hundred and eighty-eight pounds of like lawful money, being the ground-rent for the said premises, and the same to be paid at the days and times, and in such manner as the same becomes payable by virtue of the original lease thereof: And also the further yearly sum of one hundred and sixty-five pounds to the subscribers to the said Theatre, and the same to be paid and payable according to their several and respective rights and interests therein: And which said yearly rents of four hundred and fifty pounds, one hundred and eighty pounds, and one hundred and sixty-five pounds, make together the annual rent of eight hundred and three pounds: And in which said intended Lease, proper covenants shall be inserted on the part of the said Thomas Ryder, his heirs, executors, and administrators, for payment of the said several and respective rents, or annual payments, at the times and in the manner as the same respectively become due and payable: And also that the said Thomas Ryder, his heirs, executors, and administrators, shall and will save harmless, lossless, and indemnified, the said Spranger Barry, his

executors and administrators, and his and their goods and chattels, of and from the payment of the said two several rents or annual sums of one hundred and eighty-eight pounds, and one hundred and sixty-five pounds, payable as aforesaid: And also a proviso, that in case the said yearly rent or sum of eight hundred and three pounds, or the said several yearly rents of four hundred and fifty pounds, one hundred and eighty-eight pounds, and one hundred and sixty-five pounds, making together the said sum of eight hundred and three pounds, or any of them, or any part or parts thereof respectively, shall be behind and unpaid by the space of twenty days next over or after the days or times whereon the same respectively are payable as aforesaid, it shall and may be lawful to and for the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, or assigns, or any of them, into all and singular the premises thereby to be demised, or any part thereof, in the name of the whole, to re-enter, and the same and every part thereof to have again, re-possess, and re-enjoy, as in his former estate, any thing therein to the contrary thereof in any wise notwithstanding: And that he the said Thomas Ryder, shall and will execute a counterpart of the said Indenture of Lease so to be made to him of the said premises as aforesaid: And further, that the said Thomas Ryder, his heirs, executors, and administrators, shall thereby also covenant, at his and their own costs, charges, and expences, to repair, uphold, maintain, scour, clean, paint, amend, and keep the said building, theatre, or play-house, and furniture, scenes, machines, goods, and chattels, and all and singular other premises to be hereby agreed to be demised by the said Indenture of Lease, in good, sufficient, and necessary order and repair, during the said term of seven years, when and so often as need or occasion shall be or require (the main walls and

timber of the said building, called the Theatre or Play-house only excepted). And the same so well and sufficiently repaired at the end or expiration of the said term, peaceably and quietly to yield and deliver up to the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, or assigns. And that he or they, or some of them, shall and will pay, discharge, and satisfy all and all manner of taxes, charges, rates, assessments, or impositions whatsoever, which shall, during the said term, be taxed, rated, assessed, or imposed upon the said premises, or upon the owner or occupant thereof, for or in respect thereof: And that it shall and may be lawful to and for the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, or assigns, and his and their servants, agents, or workmen, and others in his or their company, twice or oftener in every year of the said term, in the day time, to come in and upon the said premises thereby to be demised, to view, search, and see the state and condition of the same; and of the decays and wants of reparation give or leave notice in writing upon the said premises, for the said Thomas Ryder, his executors, administrators, or assigns, to repair or amend the same within one month from the time of such notice, within which time the said Thomas Ryder shall and will repair and amend the same: And that the said Thomas Ryder shall not, at any time or times, during the said term, perform or act, or cause to be performed and acted, any theatrical or musical entertainment, at or within any other place than within the said theatre or play-house: And also the said Thomas Ryder shall and will, for the further and better securing the payment of the said yearly rent or sum of eight hundred and three pounds, in manner aforesaid, upon the execution of the said Indenture of Lease, enter into and execute one bond or obligation to the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, and assigns, in the penalty of

ten thousand pounds, for payment of the said yearly rent or sum of eight hundred and three pounds, or the said several and respective yearly rents of one hundred and sixty-five pounds, one hundred and eighty-eight pounds, and four hundred and fifty pounds, which composes the same as aforesaid, according to the reservation to be contained in the said Indenture of Lease for payment thereof; and shall and will execute a warrant of attorney, authorizing and empowering any attorney of His Majesty's Court of King's Bench, in Ireland, to confess judgment for him, at the suit of the said Spranger Barry, for the said sum of ten thousand pounds, so to be contained in the said bond as aforesaid, besides costs of suit: And further that he the said Thomas Ryder shall and will assign, or otherwise well and sufficiently authorise and empower the said Spranger Barry, his heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, and every of them, during the said term, to receive of and from government, or the person or persons authorized to pay the same, the annual sum of one hundred and twenty pounds, which is payable to the proprietors or managers of the said theatre or play-house, for the acting and performing four plays yearly therein, at and by His Majesty's command, as part of the said yearly rent or rents to be reserved in the said Lease: And the said Spranger Barry doth by these presents, for himself, his heirs, and assigns, further covenant, promise, grant, and agree, that he will, by the said Indenture of Lease, covenant that the said Thomas Ryder, his executors, administrators, and assigns, paying the said yearly rent or sum of eight hundred and three pounds, or the several yearly rents composing the same, as aforesaid, according to the reservation thereby to be made for payment thereof, and performing, fulfilling, and keeping all and singular the covenants, conditions, and agreements

therein to be contained, and which on his and their part and behalf are or ought to be paid, done, and performed, shall and may peaceably and quietly have, hold, use, occupy, possess, and enjoy the said premises to be thereby demised, without the lawful let, suit, trouble, denial, eviction, molestation, or interruption of or by him, his heirs or assigns, or of or by any person or persons lawfully claiming or to claim from, by, or under him, them, or any of them. In Witness whereof the said Spranger Barry hath, by himself, hereunto set his hand and seal; and the said Thomas Ryder, by his said attorney, authorized as herein-before mentioned, hath hereunto likewise set his hand and seal, the day and year first above written.

Scaled and delivered by the said  
Spranger Barry, and by the  
said Tottenham Heaphy, as  
the act and deed of the said  
Thomas Ryder (being first duly  
stamped) in the presence of us, }

SPRANGER BARRY,  
THOMAS RYDER,  
BY  
TOTTENHAM HEAPHY,  
HIS ATTORNEY,

*An INVENTORY of the Scenes, Properties, Grates, Locks, &c., belonging to the Theatre Royal, in Crow Street. Taken by THOMAS CARMICHAEL and JOHN WEST. — June 1, 1776.*

### Box Room.

A moving grate.

Three branches.

Two girandoles, bought from Cranfield.

Eight lamps, leading to the lattices, with burners.

Fifteen latches, with brass falls to the lattices and boxes; one out of repair.

Three locks to three front boxes, one key to open them.

Two locks leading from the box room to each lattice, with one key to open them.

Three globes, two without the box-room, one within; cracked one.

Two forms in the box-room.

An iron lock in Mr. Cullen's office in the box-room.

A stock lock and key in the box woman's office.

Two iron bolts to the two outside doors of the box-room.

A stock lock and key to the door going from the box-room to the stage.

Two new grates in the two rooms next the stage door.

One stock lock on West's room.

One stock lock on the outside stage door, and iron latch.

One stock lock on the inside stage door and two iron bolts.

A new press in the music room.

Two old iron grates in the music room; one form, no door to the music room.

One lock on the barber's room, no grates, one old form.

One grate in the store room next the barber's.

An old dressing table in do. without drawers.

An old fixed dressing table in do.

Three locks with keys to O. P. slips.

One stock lock to carpenter's gallery.



## DRESSING ROOMS, No. 12.

One table, an iron grate, a stock lock on the door.

## No. 13.

A table, a stock lock, and grate.

## GREEN ROOM.

A large looking glass, cracked at the corner and the bordering broken in several places.

Five small glasses, one of them cracked, and four of them out of order.

A large lamp with the burner.

A grate, setting out of order.

One table, stretching rail broke.

One large settee.

## No. 1.

One table with drawer, four stuffed chairs, two of them with castors.

A grate and two cheque window curtains.

A stock lock and key.

## No. 2.

An old grate, a table without drawers, a stock lock and thumb latch.

## No. 3.

A stock lock and key.

A grate, a fixed table without drawers.

## No. 4.

A grate setting very bad, a fixed table without drawers, a stock lock and key.

## No. 5.

A lock and key, a grate, an old table out of order, with two drawers, the frame of an old trick table.

## No. 6.

A grate only.

## No. 7.

A grate.

A stock lock and key.

A frame of a table, and a very old table.

Three locks and keys to the slips, P. S.

## TAYLOR'S ROOM, No. 8.

A stock lock and key.

## WOMAN'S WARDROBE, No. 9.

A grate.

A lock and key to the property room.

A lock and key to the prompter's office.

Eleven curtains to the boxes and lattices.

Sixteen branches, round boxes and lattices.

A lock and key to the outside pit-door next Ryan's.

A lock and key on the pit-door next Hodgkin's office, with falling handles.

Iron spikes round the orchestra, two of them wanting.

Two pieces of iron scrawl work, from the boxes to the stage.

Two small pieces of circular iron spikes from the scrawl work to the pillasters.

Nine tin sockets in the orchestra.

A wooden bar, on the pit-door next Mr. Lord's.

*June 3, 1776, continued.*

## STAGE.

Stage table, one form broke.

Three bells under the stage.

Thunder bell, alarm bell, large bell, and curtain bell.

Two tin shades, to shade light of the boxes.

Two step ladders, for the use of the stage.

One long ladder for the use of the carpenter's gallery.

One large wooden branch, hung but out of repair.

Two stage chairs.

*July 9, 1776, continued.*

Treasurer's office, a desk, and a grate, and a lock and key.

## CANDLE ROOM.

A grate, a lock and key.  
 A long table out of order.  
 An old chest

## SCENES.

A drop wood.  
 A drop palace.  
 A town flat.  
 Three chambers, *holes in one of them*, the doors of the door-chamber very bad.  
 Prison.  
 Canal garden.  
 Blasted heath, Macbeth.  
 Grand tent.  
 Cut wood, Hamlet.  
 Cave with catacombs painted on the back.  
 Statue palace.  
 Gothic palace.  
 Garden.  
 Long wood, a *hole* in it.  
 Part of the hovel in the Sorcerer.  
 Tiled chamber.  
 Statue in Merope.  
 Back of the bower.  
 Patty's house, *very bad*.  
 Doctor's brick house, in Mercury Harlequin.  
 A small cut tree.  
 Front of the orchestra, catacombs on the back.  
 Map chamber out of repair.  
 Part of the bridge in King Arthur.  
 Rialto.  
 The statue of Osiris.  
 Aimworth's house, one stile *broke*.  
 Palace arch.  
 Toy house.  
 Battlements, *torn*.  
 Garden wall, very bad.  
 Tomb in the Grecian Daughter

Library.

An old patagonian chamber in Mother Shipton.

Changeable flat in Mercury Harlequin.

Water-fall in the Dargle, *very bad*.

Cob's house, outside.

Portico.

Statue arch in Mercury Harlequin, *very bad*.

Frost scene, in King Arthur.

Inside of Cob's house, *torn*.

Long wood.

Apothecary's shop in the Dargle, *very bad*.

Outside of the Miller's house, (brick work) one part.

Scene with sacks, one half.

Water-fall.

Scene of swords.

Two pieces of plain paling.

A small single tent.

Altarpiece in Theodosius.

Palace arch of Corinthian order.

Blue striped chamber.

Iron yard painting, almost defaced.

Garden arch.

Two large wood wings, *greatly damaged*.

One piece of clouding, very old and little worth.

Three pair of picture chamber wings.

Six pair of wood wings, long used.

Five pair of statue wings, one greatly damaged.

Five pair of Gothic wings (five holes in the canvas).

One pair of Gothic wings, very bad and torn.

Five pair of town wings.

One sedan chair, No. 5, for the pantomime.

Three pair of striped chamber wings.

Two pair of marbled wings.

Two pair of bower wings, all in bad order.

Four pair of boat wings, the painting much damaged.

Two pair of marble palace wings, long used.

Two pair of back cloud wings.

One pair of back town and wood wings.

Two pair of rock wings.

*July 12, 1776, continued.*

Five small tents, used in the Fair, old.  
 A small cabin.  
 Temple in the Maid of the Mill (brick work).  
 A Chinese temple, old.  
 Juliet's balcony.  
 Outside of a Chinese temple in the Orphan of China.  
 Three small bower wings with hinges on them.  
 Balcony in the Suspicious Husband, old.  
 An old tree.  
 Two pair of wood frames for flats, not covered.  
 Padlock scene.  
 The bridge in King Arthur.  
 Two small trees.  
 A green stage cloth.  
 Juliet's bier.  
 Jobson's bed.  
 Five palace borders.  
 Five sky borders.  
 Mill house in the Maid of the Mill, torn very much.  
 Rostrum in Julius Cæsar.

*July 22, 1776, properties.*

Three pieces of black cloth.  
 Four gentlemen's turbans.  
 Six common ditto.  
 Three white hats.  
 Bow, quiver, and bonnet for Douglas !  
 Four gentlemen's *helmets*.  
 Five soldier's ditto.  
 Five forester's caps.  
 A small map, for Lear.  
 One shepherd's hat.  
 Four small paper tarts.  
 One green table cloth.  
 An old pedlar's box.  
 Four single chains.  
 One do. for the hall door.

Two green covers for stage forms.  
 One settee cover and two pillows.  
 One pair of double chains.  
 One white single do.  
 Seven spears.  
 Three ditto, broke.  
 Nine rods, one crook.  
 Two shapes.  
 One knife and fork in case.  
 An old toy fiddle.  
 One goblet.  
 Fribble's sword, very bad.  
 Five truncheons.  
 Edgar's hat.  
 Three paste-board covers for dishes.  
 One pediment for banquet.  
 Six gentlemen's helmets.  
 Lantern in Grecian Daughter.  
 One pair of scissars.  
 One press with a lock and key to it.  
 Two shelves and four drawers in ditto.  
 One fixed table.  
 One large press with four doors.  
 Three shelves and nine drawers in ditto.  
 An old press with three shelves, the back broke, no doors.  
 One ditto without back or doors, one shelf.  
 One ditto with four shelves, pannel out of the back, with one door.  
 One ditto with one drawer, the back broke, with one door.  
 One large cloaths chest, bound with iron, *no top*.  
 Three lesser chests, bound with iron, *all without tops*. \*  
 One form and two old chairs.  
 Two grates in the men's wardrobe.  
 Two pieces of scantling to hang cloaths on.  
 Four very small racks to hang cloaths on.

\* The *honesty* of the concern is beautifully proved by this mark of security —  
 No *tops* to the chests for stage apparel !

*July 23, continued.*

Twelve oak chairs, very good.

Six washing basons, one broke, four black pitchers.

Twenty-eight candlesticks for dressing.

Eleven metal thunder-bolts, sixty-seven wood ditto, five stone ditto. \*

Three baskets for thunder balls.

One canopy.

The pedestal and horse in the sorcerer, out of repair.

Hob's well, two water wheels, boat in the Dargle.

Two sets of fly grooves with barrels.

Four long barrels with multiplying wheels.

Two short barrels not moveable, curtain barrel.

Rack in Venice Preserved.

Elephant in the Enchanted Lady, very bad.

Alexander's car, some of it wanting.

The star King Arthur cut across.

Three pair of cut drapery drops with figures and back, made for the Enchanted Lady.

Midas's scaffold, and barrel, with balance weight.

One short barrel at the back of the stage.

One frame with three barrels, in the Carpenter's Gallery.

One pair of sea horses, two small barrels in the Carpenter's Gallery.

Two old scene barrels in Carpenter's Gallery.

A small ship curtain, two old trussels.

A flag and mullet for painters.

Five pair of arches and back in Mother Shipton.

Three pair of wings in Mother Shipton, changeable.

*July 24, 1776, continued.*

Four pair of small wheels, a back drop palace.

Six small traps with cords, no balance weights.

One grave trap with cords, no weight.

Two barrels under the stage not in use, with one ring only.

\* Here is great penury in most theatrical properties, except in the article of thunder. Eighty-three hot and sulphurous bolts, of metal, wood, and stone.

"Merciful Heavens! nothing but THUNDER."

The scaffold in Venice Preserved, a small cabinet.  
 Four buckets, iron bound.  
 Total — twenty-four foot-lights.  
 Total — seventy-six wing-lights.  
 Several old pantomime tricks and useless pieces of scenes.

Sept. 28, 1776, THOMAS RYDER.

*Left in the trunk in Mrs. Barry's room, at Crow-Street Theatre.*

A black velvet dress and train.  
 A yellow and silver ditto.  
 A silver brocade ditto.  
 A Spanish blue and white thread satin ditto.  
 A pink coloured silk ditto.  
 A crimson thread satin ditto.  
 A Spanish green satin ditto.  
 A white satin ditto.  
 A puckered white thread satin petticoat.  
 A blue thread satin robe.  
 A white ditto.  
 Ten white linen dresses.  
 A brown poplin dress.  
 Seven shepherdesses' ditto.  
 Two stuff petticoats and a jacket.  
 A red puckered dress.  
 A white thread satin dress, covered with gauze.  
 Four dresses in Artaxerxes.  
 A pair of shepherd's breeches. \*

\* For the dear woman's own Rosalind, no doubt.













